











LECTURES

ON THE

PREACHING OF CHRIST.

A SUPPLEMENT

TO

LECTURES ON THE HISTORY OF CHRIST.

By JAMES BENNETT, D.D.

" NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN,"-JOHN vii. 46.

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PREFACE.

This volume is the result of the author's attempt to preserve unbroken the narrative contained in his Lectures on the History of Christ. As that object required the omission of the discourses of our Redeemer, an intimation was given that these might, at some future time, be published so as to form a concluding volume; and as this semblance of a promise has been pleaded by those whose judgment and piety command affectionate deference, especially when they urge that the discourses of Christ are too important to be omitted by those who write of his life, an attempt to supply what may be deemed a desideratum, is now presented to the public, and especially to those who have perused the work of which the following pages are the sequel. Taken by itself, indeed, the theme of this volume must be deeply interesting, even to those who may have so studied the facts of Christ's history as scarcely to need farther information; but as the sermons of our Lord derive additional value from their admirable adaptation to the occasions on which they were delivered,

directions are given for reading them in due order, as a part of the evangelical narrative. The whole work will thus form a harmony of the Gospels, as far as this is important and interesting to Christians in general, and will furnish on those four inspired histories, a commentary which will be found to have many advantages beyond the ordinary form.

If such a portion of favour and blessing as God has deigned to grant to the Lectures on the History of Christ, should be indulged to this volume, it will sometimes place the Redeemer in a new, and interesting, and more glorious light; it will be the companion and comforter of some who are detained by affliction from the preaching of the Gospel; it will be found on the pillow of the dying, to cheer the passage through the dark valley; and thus, will not only add to the pleasures which have already beguiled the author's toils, but will also immensely increase his obligations to the grace which has permitted him to bring to a close his inadequate attempts to illustrate what has been justly termed, the first of all theological themes.



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LECTURES

ON THE

PREACHING OF CHRIST.

LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTORY.

HEBREWS i. 1, 2.

God hath, in these last days, spoken to us by his Son.

Whoever is animated with the true spirit of the ministry of the Gospel mourns over his own feebleness and inefficiency, and would, if he were to utter all his heart, say, "Oh, that my hearers had a better preacher, one who could pour upon their minds the light of eternal truth; lay naked the gulf beneath their feet; or transport them to heaven's gate, to catch a glimpse of the 'joys unspeakable;' or throw around their hearts the cords of persuasion, to draw them beyond the reach of these seductions that threaten their everlasting ruin! How gladly would I introduce to them one more suited to the exigencies of their case, more skilled and blessed to 'save a soul from death!' Could I obtain for them such a one, it would be the height of my ambition to introduce him to their notice; and happy should I think myself, if any thing that I could say should procure for him that regard and those triumphs that were never indulged to me."

To-day, I may say, I have found him—the preacher equal to my highest conceptions and my most ardent wishes; for "never man spake like this man." All my solicitudes, therefore, terminate in seeking for him that attention which

he demands. Moses and Elijah vanished from the mount; but the Father said of Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." From glorified spirits, and from angels; from prophets and apostles, and all mere human teachers, may you, my dear hearers, turn to the Lord himself, and say, "Now we believe, not because of thy word; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Consider then,

I. The claims of Christ as a preacher.

Too many despise this office, in which the Son of God spent his life and the most important personages of antiquity were his forerunners; for Enoch, the first who was exempted from the necessity of dying; Noah, the second father of our race; and the prophets, who were the honoured organs by which Deity spake to men, were all preachers of righteousness. Among the numerous predictions of Messiah, which raised the loftiest expectations in the minds of men, we find these words ascribed to him, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest." He is, therefore, entitled to all the consideration that can be conferred by divine authority—infallible wisdom—spotless purity—abounding grace—and effective energy.

1. Divine authority.

Jehovah himself was the first preacher of his own Gospel, and the whole human race were the auditors, when, in Paradise, the original promise of mercy was proclaimed. That "God preached the Gospel to Abraham," the inspired Apostle asserts; and it has been thought, not without reason, that, in both cases, the Son was that person of the Deity who first broke the seals of the eternal counsels, and announced the "grace that was to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Peter commenced the first evangelical sermon to the Gentiles, by saying, "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all, that word, I say, ye know." He spake as universal Lord, with the tone of deity, which is that of supreme authority. On the mount, he thus addressed men:

"Ye have heard that it was said to the ancients, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies." He bids them regard the whole frame of nature as frail and evanescent, compared with one of his words: "I say unto you, that heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away;" just as he had said, that "one iota, or one tittle, shall not pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." To every discerning mind and devout heart, the Ten Commandments derive their force from the lips that spake them, amidst the thunders that shook creation. "But if the ministration of condemnation be glorious, the ministration of righteousness exceeds in glory;" and it is to us most consoling to know, that the same God who spake the law laid aside his terrors and came down in mercy to preach the Gospel.

It has, indeed, been said by those who reject Christ's divinity, that if the disciples had considered him to be God, they would have been too much terrified to listen calmly to his instructions. Yet Moses, who knew he was conversing with God, on Sinai, brought down all the law to Israel; for God can enable us to say, with Daniel, smitten to the earth with terror, "Let my Lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me." Not, however, that the Apostles knew all the glory of Jesus; for though Thomas said to him, after his resurrection, "My Lord, and my God;" while he was with them upon earth, much darkness struggled with the light. It was not till the "Spirit came to glorify Christ," that his Apostles knew all his glory; and then, they learned, that the words which were spoken in their hearing were to be by them reported to all nations, for the use of all ages, when the divine authority of the speaker should be made known by evidences which, at first, could neither be given nor received.

The Apostles, however, always came to Christ as the highest authority, the very fountain of truth, and in all their diffi-culties consulted him as the infallible oracle. When they asked him, how it was that the supreme judicature of the Jewish church decided, "that Elijah must first come," before Messiah should appear; he answered, "I say unto you, that Elijah has already come." From the preparatory mission on which he sent them, they returned, exclaiming, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us at thy word;" and he gave them a still loftier theme for exultation, "your names are written in heaven." They asked him to allow them to call fire from heaven, as did Elijah, and were informed that the Son of man came for a purpose more divine, "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." They learned, from each day's experience, that they could "do all things, through Christ strengthening them," and that no secret was hidden from his eyes, and no work beyond the power of his arm.

His words, therefore, are the texts of our sermons, the divine authority on which they rest. Who does not feel, that, whatever may be the character or station of the preacher, whatever his powers of argument or of eloquence, the authority of Christ, to which we appeal, falls on the conscience with a weight which nothing else can equal? Modern audiences, as well as the ancient, are "astonished at his doctrine;" "for he speaks as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The most determined enemies of religion hesitate to contradict the sayings of Jesus Christ. If we assume a dictatorial tone, you say, and justly, that we are "men of like passions with yourselves;" if we reason, you can dispute either our premises or our conclusion; if we promise, you ask, is he able to perform? if we persuade, you choose whether you will consent or refuse. But when Christ commands, you feel that "thus saith the Lord;" when he determines an affair, you silence all your presumptuous reasonings; if he promises, you know the grace is sure; if he invites, you feel it is guilty to refuse. Our office is that of a witness, not of a judge; but when Christ is the preacher, you hear him say, "the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you, at the last day." Authority supreme, infinite, overwhelming, throws around his pulpit the awful glories of Sinai, but (thanks to his name) softened by the milder splendours of Zion's mount.

2. Infallible wisdom distinguishes Christ's preaching. This is so necessarily involved in the former, that it might

be doubted whether we ought to give it a separate consideration; but, since preaching is teaching, of which wisdom is an essential element, we should injure our theme, if we did not enter distinctly, and rather largely, into this quality of Christ's ministry. With what joy should we hail a prophet "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!" The wisest of mere men betray a tinge of ignorance, or of folly, that shakes our confidence in their instructions; but what did Christ ever utter that lowers the tone of our admiration, or subdues the force of our deference? Of God, that first object of human knowledge, of whom men know so little, Jesus says to his enemies, "I know him; and if I should say I know him not, I should be a liar like unto you." He spake of Deity, with the freedom of familiarity, and with the confidence of certainty; while the most enlightened conscience echoes to all he says, as equal " to the height of his great argument." When we have been hearing Christ, we feel that we have become better acquainted with him whom to know is life, and we say with the disciples, " now we are sure that thou knowest all things."

That he knew us well, "and needed not that any should testify of man," he clearly proved; for he laid open the heart, and showed what proceedeth from it. Before men ventured to speak, he answered the thoughts that were lurking in their hearts; and, at the first interview, compelled one to confess, "he told me all things that ever I did." The enemies who thought to "entangle him in his talk," he so confounded, that "they durst ask him no more questions." All ranks are levelled before him; beggars he elevates by his condescension; and princes he brings down from their pride, by his superior dignity; to the lawyers he teaches the law; to the priests, religion; "he taketh the wise in their own craftiness," and "carrieth the counsel of the froward headlong;" while "the meek he guides in the paths of knowledge," and makes all men say, "who teacheth like him?"

With all worlds he shews himself alike familiar. Standing upon earth, as one that had just alighted on it, he glances from heaven to hell, from hell to heaven; shows one reposing

on the bosom of Abraham, and another "tormented in the flame;" and while he speaks of the abyss of woe, as one that has its key, he talks of heaven as his native place, his "father's house." Of that profound mystery, the past eternity, he discourses in the style of him that knew what was "before the world was," and tells of the glory that he then had; nor with less familiarity does he inform us of what shall exist, when, after the consummation of all things, the seal of immutability shall be set upon the universe. There is nothing to be found in the Epistles, or Revelation, of which the germ may not be seen in the Saviour's preaching; for no one is able to loose the seals, or look into the book of the divine counsels, but "the lamb who is in the midst of the throne."

Of his wisdom as a teacher, the unrivalled simplicity of his style is an indubitable proof. In that volume of his sermons which we have from the pen of John, words, that some so highly value, disappear, amidst the glory of the thoughts. Made vocal by him, all nature becomes our teacher. The lilies of the field, the tares and the wheat, the shepherd and his flock, the husbandman, and his vine, and his labourers, assume a new aspect, and physical things become moral; the business of this life takes a sacred character, while he leads us to God and eternity, by the marriage and its feast, the celebration of a royal birth-day, the housewife leavening her meal, or seeking her lost piece of money. Illustrations so familiar that all can understand them, are by him made so striking that none can forget them. Here is no play of imagination, that sheds a meteor-light across our path, to bewilder, rather than illuminate; nor any involved sentence that is disentangled, only by such an effort as makes us lose our hold of the truth. So perfectly were men entranced by his preaching, that they answered his questions as if they thought his parables were real history; and the officers who were sent to take him could give no other reason, "why they had not brought him," but that " never man spake like this man."

The dignity of his wisdom produced an admirable combination of variety and repetition, which serves to keep alive

attention, and fasten the most important things on the memory. He had no morbid dread of being charged with sameness; and therefore spake as one who knew that we more frequently fail by inattention than by absolute ignorance, and need a teacher who would say, "to write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." As "a good steward," however, he "brought out of his treasure things new as well as old;" so that we feel persuaded that he who said all that we have heard, was entitled still to declare, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now."

3. Spotless purity is another attribute of Christ's ministry. A teacher can never do justice to his subject unless he is imbued with its spirit. Severe reason must distinguish the professors of mathematics, or logick; and to the lecturer on poetry, or the fine arts, a delicate taste and elegant imagination are indispensable. In religion, above all things, the teacher must be inspired with the very soul of his theme. The sins of preachers are the preachers of sin, and none but a holy man can be fit to "preach righteousness in the great congregation." But the very enemies of Christ confessed, " Master, we know that thou teachest the way of God in truth;" and even devils exclaimed, "we know thee who thou art, the holy one of God." "All that heard him bare witness," that he had no sinister aim, no love of popular applause, that mildew which so frequently spreads a blight on all we say. When he declares, "I seek not my own glory; but these things I say that ye may be saved," our conscience testifies to the truth. While some seek to commend themselves to what they call the judicious few, and others flatter the multitude; he looks on all distinctions, as from the height of the eternal throne, where differences vanish, as mountains are levelled when we ascend into the aërial regions. common people heard him gladly;" for the poor found in him a friend; but the rich learned from him the duty, and therefore the possibility, of "making to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness."

Tried by the extremes, of mistaken friendship, and envenomed

enmity; when the crowd would have made him a king, he retired from their applause to the solitude of secret devotion; and when they reviled him as a Samaritan, possessed with a devil, he never ceased to teach or to work miracles of mercy, but endured, with meekness, "the contradiction of sinners against himself." His unruffled mind pursues the even tenor of his discourse, amidst hosannas or hisses; even when his disciples were elated with ambitious hopes, or would have called down revengeful fires. Whether he is "surrounded by Pharisees and doctors of the law, come down from Jerusalem, to hear him," or by crowds of impotent folk, laid at his feet for cures, we can discern no difference in his spirit; for it is always calm, meek, dignified, heavenly, and beneficent.

He so overwhelms us with the majesty of God, that we begin to think death itself a minor affair, when he says, "fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear, fear him, who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yea, I say to you, fear him." Standing with the law of God in his hand, he so expounds and maintains its claims, that the false glosses of the most favoured sects and the most authoritative teachers, vanish like smoke from the surface of the diamond, and a lawyer exclaims, "Master, thou hast well said." Though a Boanerges, a Son of Thunder, he is without asperity. The morality of Christ is not that of the monks of La Trappe, who spend their lives in voluntary silence, and digging their own graves; for he wrought a miracle at a wedding, accepted the invitation of a Pharisee to dine with him, and spent his life in familiar intercourse with men. Far from pushing a good principle to extravagant lengths, he shews the harmonies of virtue, and renders truth and righteousness the handmaids of benevolence and usefulness. Yet he never lowers the standard of morals, to suit the tastes of men; but stoops, only to raise us; for we feel ourselves encouraged and elevated by the condescension of such a teacher, who, by shewing the loftiest holiness to be possible, renders it practicable. Such is our instructor that we cannot but feel that he has done every thing, when he has rendered us like himself. This leads to observe, that

4. Transcendent grace characterised the ministry of Christ.

If we should always seek to gain the good-will of those we teach, that they may be willing auditors, and aid our efforts by their own struggles to learn; in religion this is most essential; for we seek to reconcile the hostile mind, and we have done nothing, if we have not gained the heart. That he who came to die for us would thus teach us, we might naturally expect. From the first, he preached as if arrived at Calvary. The sermon to Nicodemus was full of the love of God in giving his Son to die for us, and of the grace of him that should "be lifted up;" as the brazen serpent, by Moses, in the wilderness. Every tender and touching figure he employed to assure us of the grace he preached. In the parable of the prodigal son, he unveiled the love of the father's heart towards a returning penitent. He exhibited himself as a shepherd, come to give his life a ransom for the flock. When he saw men wearied with their labours and their researches after bliss, he cried, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls: for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." While their sense of his miraculous works on the body was yet fresh and strong, he employed it as a means of unfolding the richer grace he designed for their souls, and doubled his miracles by this more exalted use.

He brought down religion from the awful severity of the law, to the familiarity of affection; and though he was God manifest in the flesh, he spake to us as to sons. If ever he seemed austere, it was towards those "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." If he denounced woes, they were against those who "took away the key of knowledge, not entering in themselves, and hindering those who would enter." His very wrath was grace. He brandished the flaming sword, not to keep men from the tree of life, but from the pit of death, saying, "Repent, and believe the glad tidings; for except ye repent, ye shall all perish." Destruction he exhibited as springing, not so

much from our sins, as from our rejection of the Saviour: "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "He that believeth not, is condemned; because he believed not in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Wherever there was ignorance to be instructed, or misery to be relieved, he appeared as an angel of light, and blessings attended his steps. Amidst the storm that shook the souls of sailors accustomed to perils, he rose and said, "Peace, be still; why are ye so fearful?" But he that threatened storms to calm, took up babes into his arms, and said, "Suffer the little children to come to me." If the Paralytick trembled at the presumption of his friends, who let him down in the midst of Christ's audience, he said, "Courage, son; thy sins are forgiven thee." To the last, he sustained the triumphs of his grace, calmed the hearts that were troubled at the prospect of his departure; and, shewing "the ruling passion strong in death," while his enemies were crucifying him, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Dying, he gave away a paradise, a kingdom, to one who had forfeited life itself, not only to the law of God, but to that of his country. Thus he taught upon the cross, as upon the mount; that "all manner of sin and transgression shall be forgiven to those who believe on his name."

5. Effective energy crowned the preaching of Christ.

Far removed is the simple-clearness of Christ's preaching from that tameness and inanity into which we sink, when we attempt to become plain; for he presents, in an astonishing degree, that combination of energy with simplicity, which is the highest quality of a teacher. His preaching was all full of important things, and all alive with animated scenes. He compelled the most careless to listen, and the most insensible to feel. We start at his charge, "to pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand;" and we tremble at "the worm that never dieth, and the fire that shall not be quenched." Tenderness and force seem to us incompatible; and when we put on strength, we become fierce; or mildness, we grow feeble; not knowing how to unite the eagle with the dove.

But he who was announced, from the first, as the Lamb, come to take away sin, was also proclaimed as the Lord that should suddenly come to his temple. "But who," says the Prophet, "shall abide his coming? For he is like the refiner's fire, and the fuller's soap." What tremendous energy he displayed, when he cleansed the Temple! All saw and felt "how awful goodness is." His enemies slunk away, like the wave that dashed against the rock and sank into foam. The shameless harlot, abashed before him, melted into tears that washed his feet. Amidst hosts of proud foes, he speaks, and we recall the words of the Psalmist, "The stout-hearted are spoiled, and none of the men of might have found their hands." Before his judge, he exhibits the array of the judgment, when "the Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven." Now, devils cry out, "We beseech thee torment us not;" and now, struck dumb, they are not suffered even "to say that they know him." Death, that hearkens not to our voice, obeys his; and Lazarus "comes forth." All this he does, without effort. In his preaching there were no "great swelling words of vanity," which often betray the weakness they were intended to conceal; but all is simple, yet mighty, like the laws of nature, which are always silently working wonders; or that word that said, " Be light, and light was." He marches in the greatness of his strength, and says, "I, that speak in righteousness, am mighty to save." He that could have dazzled us with rare discoveries, or entranced us with the splendour of eloquence, surprises us, as if, "out of weakness, he had waxed strong;" and makes us feel, that he has the knowledge which is power, the authority that is omnipotent.

If we see not all the saving effects that we might have expected, in the salvation of man; we should not forget, that hundreds believed on him, under all his concealment; and that it was a part of his humiliation to say, "Who has believed our report?" He himself has taught us, that "the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not glorified."

From these claims of Christ as a preacher, we are conducted to the consideration of

II. The duties of those who are his hearers.

At these I shall but glance; for they belong more properly to the concluding Lecture, as the practical application is the proper close to a sermon. That we may, however, listen to the whole course of his sermons on which we are entering, with due attention, some notice should be taken of the dispositions that become such as are privileged to hear Christ preach. I ask, then, that you would hearken as to the voice of the God of your salvation—with the spirit that becomes those whom he came to rescue from sin—with humble dependence on the grace of the Holy Spirit, and with a design to practise what we learn.

1. Let us hearken to Christ as the God of our salvation.

It is very possible to listen to his preaching with a considerable degree of attention, and even with high admiration, and yet in a spirit that is an insult to such a teacher. A profane poet was once surprised reading the prophecies of Isaiah, and when his friend expressed his wonder, the other replied, "I read this book for the bold eastern imagery with which I adorn my writings." Had Israel listened to the voice of God on Sinai, only to learn how he pronounced Hebrew, would it not have been an insult to the Sovereign Legislator? As, therefore, the Gospel " began to be spoken by the Lord himself," should we not hearken to him, as to the Sovereign of our souls, who brings upon his lips the voice, not merely of deity, but of mercy? Was not this the design of the Father, when, on the banks of the Jordan, he said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" The voice of incarnate Deity should awe the conscience and sway the heart, combining the force of supreme authority with the tenderness of ineffable grace. This is the "only lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy." For we are not come to Mount Sinai, where the sound of dreadful words made Israel to say, "Let not the Lord speak to us any more, lest we die; for they could not endure that which was commanded;" but "we are come to Mount Zion, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." He

began his ministry by saying, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor." If we were perishing on a rock at sea, with what emotions should we hearken to the voice of a friend, who had come out in a life-boat, to save us from death! What willing deference should we pay to the instructions by which his benevolent effort was to be made effectual to our rescue from the yawning deep! In such a spirit ought we to hearken to the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ, who comes to publish salvation. Whenever he preaches, it should be said, "the eyes of all were fastened on him, and they all bare witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." The views and feelings of the auditors should be such as give reason to hope for the full benefit of his ministry. If, when we hear an oration, we consider the speaker beneath us, his words will have little weight; if we have no deference for his judgment, we shall not bow our opinions to his; if we suspect him of sinister designs, we shall arm ourselves against his persuasions. Should we not, then, come to the preaching of the Lord of glory, the Prince of grace, the God of salvation, with a deep sense of his supreme dignity and authority, regarding his words as divine oracles; and with a heartfelt conviction of his benevolent compassion, that comes to draw us, by cords of love, to mercy, holiness, and heaven? How should we listen to him, if we saw him now descend from the skies? And do we not believe that these are the words of that "second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven?" Should we not, therefore, hear him as if we saw him just lighting upon our earth, and about to say to the Father, "I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them; and they have believed that thou didst send me?" Beware, lest the heathen rise up in judgment against us; and we be condemned by those who cried out in extacies, "Surely the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men."

2. We should attend to the preaching of Christ, with the dispositions which become those whom he came to rescue from sin.

With what meekness, and holy and grateful deference, should the condemned prisoners in their cell hearken to the voice of him who came to bring them news of pardon! Shall he again say, as in days of old, "Oh! earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord;" for thine inhabitants will not. Let us rather say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." To all the charges that he brings against us, let us frankly plead guilty; aware that he not only knoweth our hearts, but comes to convince, not to condemn; to show us our ruin, that we may avail ourselves of the remedy. When his word proves "sharper than any two-edged sword, because it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," we should own that "he is justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges." His words of mercy we should receive, as the parched earth drinks in the latter rain. For what confidence he deserves who comes to seal, with the blood of his heart, the grace he proclaims with the breath of his lips!

But he demands the obedience of faith, claiming to be our Lord, as well as our Saviour; and saying, "One is your Master, even Christ." Duty enforced by him should have irresistible persuasion; because he illustrates the beauty of holiness by his own example, and makes our sanctification a part of that salvation for which he gave his life. Far from quarrelling with the lofty standard of evangelical morality, or exclaiming, "these are hard sayings," we should remember that he never "bound heavy burdens on men's shoulders, which he refused to touch with one of his fingers;" but that he was himself all, and more than all, that he has taught us to be. If our admiration of his character is sincere, how welcome should be his words, "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done."

Amidst his precepts, high and holy as they are, he has scattered promises, as faithful as they are kind; that we may say, "we are saved by hope." Often he cried, "fear not;" for he knew our feebleness of soul, and designed to rouse us to noble daring and inflexible decision. To him, therefore, we should listen as to the "Captain of our salva-

tion;" and while he goes before us, we should press through hostile ranks, assured that we are invulnerable, under his broad shield. As his instructions were designed to guide us, not only through life, but across "the valley of the shadow of death," we should view him as holding the keys of the iron gate; and, when we say with the Apostle, "I am ready to be offered up," add, with him, "nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed."

3. We should, while hearing the instructions of Christ, seek the attendant influences of his Holy Spirit.

Taught by him, we rise to lofty hopes of this inestimable blessing, which is pledged to accompany his Gospel and give it full effect. We cannot hearken to his words, especially his last solemn parting charge, without finding our minds directed towards another teacher, advocate, and friend, who should succeed to the Saviour's place on earth; and, by a powerful witness to Christ, secure to him the glory of success. The Saviour associated with his own doctrine the influences of the Spirit, as the electric fluid encircles the drops of dew, and gives them a fertilizing effect. We should, therefore, watch his lips, as expecting to see him breathe upon us, and hear him say, "Receive the Holy Ghost." To forget our dependence on his Spirit, and yet expect to derive saving benefits from his word, is to contradict that word, and, under pretence of exalting, to pervert it. Those from whose testimony we receive the preaching of Christ, were themselves charged to tarry at Jerusalem, in significant silence, and not to venture to open their commission, "till they were endued with power from on high."

Penetrated with this vital part of Christ's doctrine, we shall, in the spirit of prayer, hear him preach; and while his words fall upon our ears, ours will ascend to his, saying, "Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt." To the teachers of human science we may give a mere intellectual attention, and be satisfied with the efforts of our own mind to receive the workings of theirs; but we profane Christ's teaching, if we hear him in any other temper than that of a Christian; for if we should listen to the poet,

in the spirit of poetry, and to the mere reasoner, in the soul of logic; to Christ we must yield a mind filled with sacred associations, a heart throbbing with divine emotions. Every word from his lips should be accompanied with an impulse from that Spirit, the fulness of which is deposited with him, to bestow upon his disciples, and "lead them into all the truth." Do not our own hearts tell us, that, deep as was the condescension of our divine Teacher, in stooping to our condition; our grovelling spirits still need to be brought up to that state on which he felicitates Peter, "Blessed art thou; for flesh and blood has not revealed these things to thee, but my Father who is in heaven?"

Finally. "If we know these things, happy are we if we do them." As some men make preaching a mere exhibition of talent, we cannot wonder that their hearers make it a barren amusement. " But you have not so learned Christ." He himself, deeply serious and practical, says, "Hear, that your souls may live." "If any man will do my Father's will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Despising mere theories, he taught a doctrine that leads to immediate effects, by which we become assured of the truth of his word, and of our own interest in it. Going before us, he points with the finger, and says, "Behold the way to God." He that follows the directions, finds them unfolded, as he pursues the road, and discovers their truth and value, with more clearness and certainty, every step he takes. The most practical, therefore, are the most intelligent hearers of this preacher; while the barren speculators become bewildered in their way. When we have practised one lesson, he imparts another, for he designs to conform us to his own character; and "though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered, and being made perfect, became the author of salvation to all that obey him."

LECTURE II.

CHRIST'S SERMON TO NICODEMUS.

JOHN iii. 1-21.

IF conjecture had been our guide, we should have concluded that such a preacher as Jesus Christ would deliver his first sermon in a splendid edifice, to an immense audience, in the blaze of day; but, conducted by the Sacred History, we find him in an obscure lodging, amidst the darkness of night, visited by a single inquirer, to whom he delivers the divine discourse which forms the commencement of that volume of Christ's sermons contained in the Gospel according to John. The prophet who "saw his glory" said, "we hid, as it were, our faces from him," and it was a necessary part of the humiliation of him before whom angels veil their faces, that a ruler of the sacred nation, among whom Christ appeared, ashamed to be seen coming "to him," * stole into his presence under the cover of night. We blush, indeed, yet not for our Lord, to whom shame, being endured for our sakes, was glory; but for his timid hearer, who virtually confesses that the disgrace was all his own; for why durst he not venture to consult in the face of day one whom he declares to be a teacher come from God? Since this was not merely his own solitary conviction; for he speaks in the name of others-" We know that no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Mere theorists may pronounce miracles impossible; but they planted in the breasts of witnesses convictions, which it was not in their power to eradicate; and as we profess to adopt this good

^{*} The testimony of manuscripts, as adduced by Griesbach, is conclusive in behalf of reading, αὐτὸν, him; which must have been early exchanged, (probably to suit the Lectionaria,) for τὸν Ἰησοῦν, since the Syriac has this reading.

confession of Nicodemus, let us, with him, sit down at the feet of Jesus, to hear a discourse which has been sealed by signs from heaven. It extends, indeed, through many verses; but as the philosopher at one time examines, by a microscope, the wing of a fly, and at another sweeps, with a telescope, the vast arch of heaven, we, who often investigate a single verse with microscopic minuteness, may now take a more comprehensive glance at this copious discourse of our Lord. It includes the doctrines of regeneration, atonement, and salvation by faith.

I. Regeneration, or the new birth, is taught in the first twelve verses.

Far from lingering, to scent the incense of praise offered by a rabbi, who owns Christ his rabbi, or to return compliment for compliment; our Redeemer changes the whole current of thought by plunging at once into another theme. But "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and he displays all the authority of truth, tempered by condescending grace.

- 1. He enforces the doctrine of regeneration with high authority: "Verily, verily," says the Majesty of eternal truth, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Descended from Abraham, the friend of God; initiated into his church, by the seal of the Covenant; rich in sacred lore, and aware that the prophet Daniel predicted that the God of heaven would set up a kingdom upon earth, thou comest to inquire what news I bring concerning it: this is my first information, that 'except a man be born again, he cannot even see that kingdom' when it is erected. Thou ownest me a teacher from God; but though I am, I must have a hearer born of God, or he can no more behold what I come to exhibit, than he could see the light of day before he was born." Of this, the hearer gave instant proof, by an answer so ridiculously gross, that we almost suspect it to be intentionally rude: "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be horn ?" *
- * Though the Greek ἄνωθεν may be rendered above; Nicodemus understood the Syriac, which Christ employed, as conveying the meaning of

The Pharisee had, indeed, betrayed a tendency to retract his admission of Christ's divine authority; but our heavenly Teacher maintains his dignity, and, instead of abandoning his doctrine, merely presents it in a new point of light: "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." As Jesus was known by the Pharisees to baptise, he probably saw the mind of Nicodemus turn towards the external sign, and therefore warned him that this must be accompanied with the regenerating grace of the Spirit, which was the grand blessing signified, or a man could not really, though he might apparently, enter into the kingdom which Christ came to set up. We are "saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." With this Spirit, a teacher of Israel ought to have been acquainted; for Moses had said, "the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters" at creation. David had prayed, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me;" and Isaiah had complained of God's people, that "they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit." To be born of this Spirit, who imparts a new nature, which consists in holy sentiments and parts a new nature, which consists in holy sentiments and affections, must be essential to our entering into that spiritual empire which is called the reign of righteousness. Being born of water, or baptism, though merely the sign and seal of regeneration, was fitly introduced, to warn the man who stole into the school of Christ by night, that it was necessary to take upon him the profession of the Christian religion in the face of day. But, aware of the propensity of men to dote on outward rites, our heavenly Instructor drops all further mention of water, and dwells on the Spirit alone. O that Christians had been wise enough to take this valuable hint! They had not then substituted the water that washes the body for the influences of the Spirit that regenerate the soul. But our divine prophet—

2. Illustrates his doctrine with condescending grace.

Though sovereigns assert and command, leaving it to sub-

our translation; for, entering a second time into the mother's womb, would not lead to a birth from above. Again would be the proper translation of the Syriac See 1 Peter, i. 3.

jects to prove and persuade; the Lord of glory disdains not to show that he had not employed a mere rhetorical flourish, a high sounding phrase, to involve in unnecessary obscurity the simple idea of reformation, or proselytism. By an appeal to our natural birth, he at once explains the nature and proves the necessity of being born again. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Flesh sometimes means human nature, as when it is said, "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" but it also signifies our nature as fallen and depraved, where the Apostle says, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit; and in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." As, therefore, like begets like, and "a generation of vipers" will be "a seed of evil doers," David, mourning over his sins, says, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "We are by nature children of wrath;" for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? And how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" As mere children of men, born after the flesh, we inherit from our natural parents, not holiness, but sinfulness: it was therefore a saying in the primitive church, "Christians are not born, but made such."*

But the mystery! the mystery! exclaims Nicodemus; and the mystery! the mystery! re-echoes many a living voice. Where then does the offensive mystery lie? In the language of our Lord, the figure he employs? Is it asked, why use the strangely bold metaphor, being born again? Our ideas, even of spiritual things, being derived through the senses, figurative language is not necessarily obscure; but the most luminous instructors of the simplest minds often find figures contribute as much to perspicuity as to energy. But this bold phrase has forced attention to the truth, the doctrine of regeneration, which, I fear, is the real source of offence. Yet, if we are born in a depraved state (and who can look around the world, and deny that there is something radically wrong in human nature?), then is it not necessary to be born

 $^{^{\}ast}$ Fiunt non nascuntur Christiani.—Tertulliani Opera, Vol. I. Apologeticus, sive l. ii. c. 18.

again, in the sense of commencing a new kind of existence, which will remedy the evils of that nature we brought with us into the world?

To show that the mystery which may hang over it should not cause us to reject the doctrine, we are reminded of mysteries in nature. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This has been thought to allude to a text in which Solomon speaks of the mystery of the winds, and of our birth. "He that watcheth the winds will not sow, and he that eyeth the clouds will not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the wind, nor how bones grow in the womb of her that is pregnant, so thou canst not tell the works of God who performeth all things." Xenophon introduces Socrates, saying, "the winds themselves, indeed, are invisible, but their effects are manifest to us; and we perceive them when we go against the wind. Reflecting on this, therefore, we should learn not to despise invisible things, but, aware of their power, should be taught by them to honour the Deity."

Both the Old Testament and the New employ, for the Spirit,* a word derived from wind, or breath; so that the same word is, in this very passage, translated both ways. The influences of the Holy Spirit are, indeed, invisible, as the wind; the mode of their operation is as inscrutable; and their order as incapable of being reduced to any known law: but why should we doubt that they are in religion mighty as the wind is in

^{*} But there is no small difficulty in deciding on the sense of $\tau \delta$ $\pi \nu \epsilon \hat{\nu} \mu \alpha$ here. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catechism, takes it, not for the wind, but for the Holy Spirit, "whose voice they who are worthy shall hear;" and it would be natural to take the word here in the same sense in which it is employed in all the rest of the Saviour's discourse. Where the wind is mentioned in Acts ii. 2, $\pi \nu o \hat{n}$ is employed. But it is thought that the words, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit," intimate a comparison between the Spirit and something else; though nothing more may be intended, than that every one who is regenerated experiences a secret mysterious change, correspondent with the invisible, but mighty operation of the Spirit, who works as he pleases.

nature, and their effects as perceptible and as useful in the system to which they belong?

If the unhappy resemblance of each generation of men to the preceding, too clearly proves that we inherit a fallen nature from our parents according to the flesh, the resemblance of Christians to the Holy Spirit affords evidence that they are born of that Spirit. While the brood of the vulture snuffs up blood, the young dove is gentle like the parent bird; so he who had given melancholy proofs that he descended from sinners, has proved as clearly, that he had been born again of the Holy Spirit, by becoming spiritual and holy. If it were not supported by facts, the doctrine of regeneration might be doubtful; but if the change and its author are invisible as the wind, the effects are as visible and as mighty.

"Art thou a master in Israel," then, says our Lord, "and knowest not these things?" Is it asked, how should he have known? The essence of religion is the same in all ages. The baptism of proselytes, and the custom of speaking of them as newly born, are disputed points; but we have the plain testimony of inspired writers, which a Jewish rabbi ought to have known. David prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." And is not this imagery as bold as that which Christ employs, and equally significant of a change of nature? By Ezekiel, God promises, "a new heart will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you. I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh." This is virtually promising that they shall be born again. Moses taught the same doctrine, when he said, "The Lord thy God shall circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, that thou mayest live." For circumcision, like baptism, taught that we are born in such a state as makes it necessary that we should experience a great change. The apostle Paul, therefore, says, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that of the flesh, but of the heart." A master of Israel ought to have known these things. That regeneration was not taught

so clearly as in this discourse of Christ, must be granted; yet, instead of the stare of ignorant wonder, or the objections of unbelief, Nicodemus should have exhibited the grateful surprise, the joyful welcome, that might have been expressed by such language as this:—" Now I see clearly what was before shrouded in mystery; 'the veil upon the face of Moses' is done away by Christ."

The Rabbi is, therefore, justly reproached for not receiving the testimony, which Christ ascribes, not merely to himself, but also to the Father and the Spirit, who had taught the same truth by the prophets, and had actually produced the very change inculcated, wherever men had risen from the ruins of the fall to the possession of the Divine image. But though "we speak what we know to be true, and testify what we have seen effected, you receive not our witness." The evidence of fact is so convincing, that they are without excuse who reject a doctrine attested by the change manifestly wrought on thousands of ancient, and myriads of living, witnesses. May we not hope that this last reproof touched Nicodemus to the quick? For after this, we hear no more of his objections; he sits listening in silence; and his future history reminds us of "the path of the just, which shines more and more to the perfect day."

Let us, then, beware, lest he rise up in judgment against us. For why should we resist a truth so manifestly essential to our dearest hopes? The necessity for such a change as regeneration, is a mere matter of fact. The possibility of it, is a part of the Gospel—tidings so joyous, that we should spring forward with rapturous eagerness to embrace the truth. Far from repining that we must, we should exult, that we may be born again. Had we but the same evidence of having experienced the new birth, as we all have of being born at first of fallen, sinful parents, happy were we.

The second class of truths taught in this discourse, is that which concerns

II. Atonement by the death of Christ: v. 12-17.

The greater the necessity of regeneration, the greater its previous improbability; for the more depraved man is, the

less likely is it that a righteous governor will bestow such a favour. Fallen spirits need a new nature; but who expects that they will obtain one? How then can men hope for a transformation so blissful. Christ here proceeds to answer this question, by unfolding the love of God and the method by which he reconciles his grace to sinners, with a just opposition to sin. Our Saviour shows that he had not exhausted all the wonders of the divine councils, but had yet to announce something more mysterious. "If I have told you earthly things and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? What I am about to say transcends that which has excited your wonder, as far as heaven rises above the earth. For regeneration is wrought upon living men, and is capable of being proved by facts; but now behold a mystery that stands alone. If you ask where? I answer, in the person of the speaker; for "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: the living God was manifested in the flesh." The Rabbi was thus prepared for something strange; but what follows must have surpassed his expectation, for the words are so difficult, that I have found it hard to make up my own mind concerning their sense, and may perhaps find it still more so to satisfy yours. "No man has ascended up into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven." Christ here apprizes us of the mystery of his own person. Some apply the ascent into heaven, to Christ's knowledge of divine and celestial things: but the connection between the ascent and the descent seems to require that we should interpret the words thus: "No man ever ascended up into heaven to be exalted to divine honours; but he that came down from heaven, to be humbled unto death, shall thus ascend. Though he is the Son of man, he has also a divine nature, in which he is even now filling heaven as well as earth." Thus the prophet Daniel exhibited the Messiah to the ancient church: "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; and his dominion is an everlasting dominion."*

Christ here presents himself to Nicodemus as a complete Saviour, that has lived and died, risen and ascended to heaven, for he speaks of things to come as if already past. If I were to propose another version and exposition of this difficult passage, I should adopt the opinion of those who think that, "ascending up to heaven," means penetrating into the Divine counsels; and that the paraphrase should run thus: "No man has entered into the secrets of heaven, but he who, being in heaven, came down to bring to men the information he possessed." This assertion of the personal glory of the Redeemer is made, as it often is by the Apostles, introductory to the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Son and the love of the Father. See then

1. The Sacrifice of the Son.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up." The history of the murmurings of Israel, the judgment of the fiery serpents, and the remedy provided by suspending a brass serpent on a pole, you well know. The phrase "lifted up," is equivocal, and might mean elevation to honour; but being associated with the type, it is fixed to signify hung up, as the brazen serpent was, on a pole like the cross. Our Redeemer, on another occasion said, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, ye shall know that I am he; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men to me. This spake he, signifying by what death he should die."

If now the Rabbi entered, with any tolerable attention, intelligence, and perspicacity, into what he heard, astonishment must have seized his mind. First, wrapped to the skies, in contemplation of the wondrous visitor that came down from heaven, and yet was ever in heaven, Nicodemus was afterwards plunged into terror at the prospect of the execution of this glorious personage, as a criminal upon a gibbet. If the remembrance of the words of Daniel, "Messiah the prince shall be cut off, but not for himself," could

reconcile to this astounding annunciation, the Rabbi must still have said, "This teacher from God has not spoken of himself as divine, from the impulse of vain glory; for here he exhibits himself, hanged as a criminal: this he said must be-it is heaven's mode of saving man, as the suspension of the brazen serpent was the appointed remedy for Israel." What an evidence of his sincerity! He waits not till the tide of popularity shall turn, then to make a virtue of necessity by submitting to die, and displaying the fortitude of a martyr; but even now, in the very commencement of his career, while I hail him as a teacher come from God, he is not afraid to risk all his popularity, by predicting his own violent death. From this hour his fate is sealed; he must either die, publicly executed; or live, convicted of falsehood. He must then, be sincere; for no impostor would, in the bright dawn of popularity, exhibit himself as ultimately rejected. I will, therefore, watch for the event, and see how it will confirm or refute his words."

You, my dear friends, now turn towards the cross. You exclaim, "No wonder that we see Nicodemus there, with his costly spices, to form a fragrant bed for the sacred corpse of Jesus. What was more natural than that this sermon should rush upon the mind of the hearer, when the lips of the preacher uttered the dying words, 'It is finished?' How powerfully was a comparison of the event with the prediction, calculated to induce the Rabbi to look at Jesus whom we pierced by our sins, and to derive healing from his wounds!"

This doctrine of the sacrifice of the Son, was followed by a display of

2. The love of the Father.

The Saviour spoke, only of his humiliation and death, saying nothing of his love, which fastened him to the cross; for he committed to that Spirit, whose regenerating influence he had taught, the care of glorifying Christ and his redeeming love; but the beloved Son, who had become a faithful servant, applied himself with ardour to teach our obligation to the Father. For this purpose, he who had hitherto

called himself merely the Son of man, now takes a higher title, that we may be penetrated with the assurance that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son." Here, again, the misery and danger to which we are exposed by sin, are exhibited, as they were in the allusion to Israel dying by the serpent's poisonous bite, the just punishment of their murmurings. The transcendent love of the Father cannot be duly appreciated, or even understood, except by means of our ruin. If it be said of a mother, she so loved her babe, that she gave her fortune, or her life, that it might not perish; every one must suppose that the child was in danger of being seized by murderers, or of falling down a precipice, or was exposed to some other equally tremendous ruin.

"With God is terrible majesty." It, therefore, infinitely concerns us, to know that there is such a property as love, in that Almighty Being in whose hands we lie, and that there is benevolence enough in Him to entertain kind designs towards us, who have merited anything but his love. Conscience tells us that he hates our sins, and he has revealed himself, armed with justice to punish them; but in our earliest moments we learn to take refuge from hostile our earliest moments we learn to take refuge from hostile power, in the bosom of parental affection. Where, however, can we fly from the wrath of a God, except to the love of that God? To learn, then, that this property exists in the Universal Being, to all the infinite extent of his own nature, and with all the omnipotence of his irresistible arm, was worth any price. To bring out this to the view of the whole universe, with infinite advantage, sin was suffered to enter. For though this is of all things the most dreadful, the love of God is, to a still more intense degree, glorious and amiable. Sin is all evils in one; but it finds its sufficient counterpoise in the love of God. If, therefore, it was infinitely desirable to know, that God, the first essence, the creative power, can love; it also deeply concerns us, who have to draw largely on that quality, to know to what degree he can love. Christ has, therefore, given us a mighty, undefinable impression of the grand exercise of this attribute, by saying, "God so loved the world." Ever since these words fell upon the ear of the Church, they have made our spirits rise and swell and stretch, taxing all their powers, to know what this "So loved" can mean. Shall we say we have the explanation in the following words, "So loved, as to give his only begotten Son?" This heightens, rather than explains the difficulty; makes it not easier, but harder to be understood. For if our love to a son, especially an only one, is tender and strong, what shall we say of the love of a God towards his own, or, as an Apostle's expression might be rendered, his proper Son. A new mystery is thus introduced, that peculiarity in the Divine nature, which is developed by redemption, that in the one living and true God there is the distinction of the Father and of the Son, as well as of the Holy Spirit. It is only in this peculiar and exalted sense of the phrase, "Son of God," that the language of Christ is intelligible, or even natural. For to suppose that he means to speak of himself as the Son of God, in no higher sense than as a good man, is to make Christ's words senseless. What meaning can there be in that expression, "So loved the world as to give his only begotten Son," unless the Son of God is more than a counterpoise for a whole world of men? Yet the Saviour does not attempt to explain this mystery; he makes no apology for it, but introduces it, to be implicitly believed, just as a teacher, proved to be from heaven, had a right to do.

If, however, sin is such an evil as to require this vast sacrifice, how could God, who has no pleasure in iniquity, love us who were identified with sin? We must distinguish between the love of complacence, approbation, or delight, and that of benevolence or good-will. It is in this latter sense that God loved us as his creatures, who might again bear his image, and return his love; as a father may love the persons of children, whose characters and conduct virtue compels him to hate. In this sense, Christ speaks of God's love to the whole world; for we reject, with Calvin, the unnatural, unscriptural phrase—the elect world; since the elect are distin-

guished from the world out of which they are elected. Universal benevolence, however, includes rather than excludes a special love to some who shall become actual partakers of the benefits of Christ's death. Election is any thing but a diminution of benevolence. The love which a judicious Calvinist ascribes to God, is just so much above and beyond what Arminianism admits; "God has so loved the world, that he has not only given his Son a sacrifice, sufficient for it, so that whosoever believeth shall not perish," but he has also "in love predestinated" some to believe and to be saved. But Christ still further displays the love of God in the mission of his Son. We seem to hear Nicodemus exclaiming, "If such was our guilt that nothing but the death of the Son of God could save us, we might rather have expected that God would send his Son to destroy us." To this thought, so natural and so true, our Saviour seems to reply, by declaring that what we might have expected we have escaped.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world." That he might have done this, we must own and feel; or despise Christ's words as spiritless, and even false. Were the king's son to visit you, and were you to hear him say," My father has not sent me to condemn you;" would you not, more than surprised or embarrassed, ask, What have I done for which I should be condemned? Would you not at last resent the implication as an insult? Is it possible, then, that we should receive, with admiring gratitude, Christ's gracious words, unless we feel that such is our guilt that we may well wonder at the mercy which saved us from condemnation? In fact, nothing but the very wickedness which might have brought down vengeance on us, can prevent us from owning, that if we had merely been told that God was about to send his Son into the world, we had reason to exclaim, "Surely it is to condemn us."

For who can deny that the world has furnished sufficient reason for a visitation of vengeance from heaven? Has not God, the first of beings, the parent of our existence, the sovereign of our souls, the benefactor of our race, been set at nought and despised, as not worth thinking of, or caring for? Has he not been blotted out of remembrance, and treated as if he were annihilated? Or, when he has been thought of and mentioned, has it not been with insulting levity, or malignant sneers, or fierce hostility; so that he who would give him the reverence and affection which are his due, must, for being the friend of God, endure the hostility of the world? Is not the sacred and adorable name uttered more frequently in oaths than in prayers, employed as a poison in which to dip the arrows of execration, to make them more deadly?

He has commanded us to love each other as a second self. And does he not behold us, "filled with envy and malice, hateful and hating one another?" Has not selfishness supplanted the law of benevolence? Is not each one struggling to raise himself on another's ruins? Instead of honouring all men, are not the failings or misfortunes of one man made the sport of another? What murders have polluted the earth, and cried to heaven for the vengeance it has denounced against the shedders of human blood! What has been the grand trade of nations, but war? And what is war, but wholesale murder, accompanied by the suspension of all the laws of morality? Yet who have been so honoured and rewarded as warriors?

Nay, the very religion of man has been his foulest crime, and the greatest insult on his God. The first command of heaven has been most universally, most outrageously violated. Millions of false gods have been invented and manufactured, till the true one was scarcely known; and, for the only Deity, the first fair, the first good, what has been substituted? All that was contemptible in meanness, all that was horrible in ugliness, and all that was loathsome in filthiness; as if any thing, however vile, blocks, or monkeys, or reptiles, rags, or rotten wood, were good enough to represent God; so that you would suppose the design were to degrade the idea of Deity, and poison the springs of devotion in the heart.

But where the knowledge of the true God has been preserved, and his worship maintained, this has degenerated into

heartless form. Hypocrisy has added to the guilt of concealed enmity. Even among the professed friends of God, the few who have worshipped him in spirit and in truth, have been "as speckled birds,"* aliens among their nominal brethren, strangers in their Father's house, which has been made a house of merchandise, or a den of thieves. "Those who cast them out as evil, said, Let God be magnified;" and "those who killed them, thought they did God service;" so that the best blood that ever flowed in human veins has been shed by those who called themselves the church and people of God. Can any thing be wanting to prove the malus animus, the evil mind of man towards God?

Might we not well have expected, that he would say, "Shall I not visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a people as this?" If, then, we heard of God's sending his Son into the world, was there not reason for alarm—for the cry, "He is coming to condemn us!" Had we not just cause to dread, lest he should "come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those who know not God?"

God has, indeed, sent his Son into the world, of which he has given us such proofs, that we may say with the Apostle, "We know that the Son of God is come." That we might know him, when he came, such predictions were given as formed, not only a picture of his person, but an anticipative history of his life. When he was just coming, Providence exhibited the signs foretold. "I will shake the heavens and the earth: I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come." A heathen historian owns that, about this time, the rumour was abroad, that "one, who should come from the east, was about to possess universal empire." Every thing prepared us to hail him, saying, "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." In the temple of God, aged saints,

^{*} Jer. xii. 9.

who were in the secret of heaven's counsels, lingered, in the delightful assurance that they should not see death, till they had seen death's conqueror. They saw, and expired in delight, exclaiming, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

Angels darted from the skies, as arrows of light, shot before, to announce the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in his wings. He came forth to view, and "we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." What conscious dignity! yet how remote from arrogance! He acted as one to whom difficulties were unknown, and to whom power was no novelty.

Life, that most mysterious product of power altogether divine, was subject to his control; for the diseases that threatened it, he banished; the food that supported it, he created; and the death that has trampled upon it, he vanquished; showing that he was "God, the Lord, to whom belong the issues from death."

But death came upon himself, and shook the faith of those who had said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Yet even the centurion, who watched the execution, seeing the might and majesty of that death, which shook creation, and proved that no one took this precious life from him, but that he laid it down of himself, exclaimed, "Surely this was, not only a righteous man, but the Son of God." The very thing that threw suspicion over his claims, at last triumphantly established them; for he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

All things, however, proved that he was not sent to condemn the world. He came not with the crash of the thunderbolt. Soft and silent as the flakes of falling snow, or refreshing and lovely as the dew-drops of the morning, his words fall on our ear. If the cannon's roar fitly announces the mighty ones, the warriors of earth; notes of peace proclaimed the entrance of the Son of God into this world.

He came, not as one angry with us, and about to condemn us; but as if he loved us, and would become one of us. Instead of the giant-form of vengeance, he threw himself upon our confidence, or even our compassion, in all the gentleness and loveliness of infantile weakness. That the authority and power he possessed were not for condemnation, he showed by many infallible proofs. For, whom did he hurt by his might? What storms did he raise? What vengeance inflict? What insults avenge? The sinner that lay trembling at his feet, heard him say, "I do not condemn thee. Go, sin no more."

But, must we confine ourselves to this negative praise? Is this all that we can say: "Our Judge has been here and did not condemn us?" No: our Lord declares that the salvation that we could not have expected, he came to bring. "God sent his Son into the world, that the world, through him, might be saved."

Well he remembered, and faithfully accomplished, the godlike errand on which he came. Far from erecting a flaming tribunal, and citing sinners to hear their deserved doom, he went after them, as the good shepherd in the wilderness, "seeking that which was lost."

To show that he came to save us from sin, the just cause of condemnation, he began by removing the various miseries which are its bitter effects. Blindness, deafness, dropsy, palsy, distortion, leprosy, fever, demoniac possession, and even death itself, that incurable disease, he cured, with a word, a touch, a look, a thought. But why? To show that it was he, of whom Isaiah said, "he himself took away our sins and bore away our sorrows." Knocking off a criminal's chains and opening the prison doors, announce the royal pardon that saves the forfeited life; and Jesus said, "that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, rise, Paralytic, take up thy bed and walk."

But it may be justly said, if he proved that he came to save us from the guilt of sin, and exhibited himself as the Lamb slain for a sin-offering, is there not another and more fatal part of our ruin? Has not sin depraved us, corrupted us, debauched us, alienated us from God and goodness, and rendered us unfit for bliss, incapable of being blessed?

Doubtless. This is the core of the evil; and has not Christ met this giant mischief with an adequate salvation?

This will be farther unfolded by the remaining class of truths contained in this discourse.

III. Salvation by faith, v. 17-21.

Our Saviour proceeds to show by what means we appropriate to ourselves the inestimable blessing. Here we learn that a new and peculiar dispensation of moral government is introduced, containing two important principles.

1. Reliance on Divine mercy must be inspired by the Gos-

pel, ere we can enjoy its saving benefits.

Men naturally expect that some great work must be performed by themselves, in order to obtain the Divine favour. But when they hear of simply believing, they are confounded, and exclaim, "Can that be all! We expected to be called to do some great thing." But may I not say, with Naaman's servant, "If you had, would you not have done it?" How much more then, if Christ says, believe and be saved? For all this stupendous work that has preceded, was designed to bring salvation nigh to the guilty; that you may no more say, "Who shall ascend up into heaven; or who shall descend into the depth? For the word is nigh thee, even the word of faith that we preach; that if thou shalt believe on the Lord Jesus, thou shalt be saved: Therefore it is by faith, that it may be by grace."

Guilt makes us fearful and suspicious; so that when angels have appeared, men have trembled, as at the sight of ministers of vengeance. How naturally, then, might they have started, at the entrance of the Son of God into this world! Welcome therefore should be the declaration, that he came "not to condemn, but to save!" How powerfully is this calculated to inspire the faith on which hangs our salvation! For as the dying Jew was healed by looking to the brazen serpent, so the perishing transgressor is saved by casting the eye of faith, to him whom we have pierced by our sins. This is the constant testimony of Christ; and what fitter mode of putting us in possession of the benefit of his mission could have been

adopted? What is more appropriate? What more in harmony with the love of the Father, or the compassion of his atoning Son? What more natural, than that we should be required, to cast ourselves into a bosom so tender, and repose our faith in one who has done so much to inspire our confidence? The proper object of faith being a testimony, or assurance given us by one that is worthy of credit, the love of God in Christ is made the theme of the Gospel, or the glad tidings that form the testimony of the inspired witnesses. We are assured, that on believing we are made partakers of the complete salvation; or, in other words, "we are justified by faith." And what can have created the prevailing prejudice against this doctrrine, which is so positively taught, so frequently urged? The object exhibited was admirably calculated to inspire this faith; this confiding mind is exactly what we need, to calm the terrors of an agitated conscience, and to acquire the confidence of a pardoned criminal. To bring back an alienated child to trust itself in the bosom of a transcendently benevolent, forgiving parent, must be most grateful to one so kind, and most accordant with the designs of his heart, in making such a sacrifice for our deliverance. To him who feels his guilt and looks eagerly round for relief, who sees the loveliness of the Divine character, but remembers how justly it is opposed to our sin, who feels the desirableness of affiance in God, but the difficulty of inspiring it in a guilty breast, nothing can be so dear, as an assurance that we are in no danger of presumption, when trusting our souls to the compassionate bosom that is thrown open to receive them. We are told, that when a little bird, pursued by a hawk, took refuge in the bosom of a Greek, and he stifled the trembling creature, his countrymen exclaimed, that he was worthy to die, for such a man was fit to make a tyrant. Never will the soul, that flies on the wings of faith to the bosom of Christ, perish there.

2. The mercy of God rejected by unbelief, will aggravate our condemnation.

We should carefully distinguish between cause and occasion, between direct design and accidental effect. Creation

is the cause of much good, and the occasion of some evil; the cause of the existence of a universe pronounced "very good," and the occasion of the entrance of sin, the evil of evils. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world;" yet, "he that believeth not is condemned already." For whosoever comes in view of Christ crucified, and turns again without believing and being reconciled, carries in his own breast the sentence of condemnation; his blood is upon his own head, and the day of doom will do nothing more than confirm the sentence already passed. His condemnation now assumes a new character, being founded, not so much on his original rebellion, for all that might have been forgiven, as on his refusing the reconciliation, which, once rejected, leaves nothing henceforth but a "fearful looking for of judgment; for there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." To have seen such a Saviour, attended with his satisfactory credentials, and to have treated him as an impostor, is regarded as such a crime that all others are passed by, to fasten upon this one; just as human tribunals would not indict a man for theft if he were known to be guilty of murder. When we shall stand before the Saviour of the world, as its judge, let us beware lest the sin of not believing on his name should be found to have thrown into the back-ground all our other crimes.

The design of the sun is to give light; yet the brightest sun produces the strongest shadow, which dies away again as twilight terminates in night. It is impossible that such a display of Divine benevolence, as we have in Christ, should, having been exhibited and rejected, leave us exactly where we were before. If we are not melted, and reconciled, and saved by believing, we must be hardened and loaded with additional guilt; so that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorra in the day of judgment than for us. Our future punishment arising in a great degree from the operation of our own minds, and the recollection of our past history, such a dispensation as that of the Gospel must leave stings in the unbelieving mind. Nothing, therefore, can be more pernicious to man than that deceitful candour, that

cruel benevolence, which is so commonly exhibited in the flippant denial of Christ's words, that salvation is by faith, and that the most certain and most aggravated cause of condemnation is unbelief.

I know it is asserted, that we have no command over our belief, which being perfectly involuntary, can be no test of character. But I know also that this assertion is made in the teeth of the Scriptures and of this most solemn discourse of Christ. For here we are assured that the same Gospel, which is the sovereign remedy for the moral disease of man, is also a test of character, and against some is fatally conclusive. The medicines that are adapted to the cure of a certain malady may ascertain whether the person is afflicted with it or not, and sometimes prove the fact in an alarming way. Christ is the touchstone of hearts: "This child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Imagine to yourselves the whole creation just as it now is, except in this one particular, that it has no light, either natural or artificial, sun or moon, or stars, or lamps, or torches, or candles. By the want of this one blessing, light, how would all others be diminished, and the whole world thrown into gloom! But the Creator says, "Let there be light." What a transformation from dreariness to joyous splendour! Such a blessing is Christ to the moral world, and such a change does he create. But, when the sun rises in the morning, he is not welcomed by all. The larks, indeed, mount up to the skies, merrily carolling, and "man goes forth to his work and to his labour till the evening;" but the bats fly off screaming at the light; owls wink, and, offended with the blaze, retire to holes; wild beasts creep to their dens; while thieves, murderers, and adulterers, hurry away from the light that detects their crimes. Nor was the moral light which Christ brought into the world less offensive to the wicked. See how he flashes conviction into their souls, and how they wink, and struggle, and "rebel against the light."

By their treatment of the Gospel, therefore, men betray their characters; for "he that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved; but he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be manifest that they are wrought in God." Here I suspect that our Lord gave to Nicodemus a reproof delicately, yet faithfully kind. For, coming by night, he was reproved, as one afraid of the light; yet, for coming at all, and opening now his heart to the truth, he was taken by the hand as a sincere disciple, who would eventually "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Wherever the Gospel is rejected, the fault lies in what the Scriptures call "the evil heart of unbelief;" and wherever it is believed, the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit is illustrated; for he is the Spirit of faith. And who is not aware that men of one character will receive a truth, which those of an opposite disposition will reject, not only with incredulity, but with aversion and scorn? Who is not conscious that the reception he gives to moral truth depends, in a great degree, not only on his own radical character, but even on his present frame of mind, as more or less spiritual and faithful to his own convictions?

We have now taken a hasty glance at this first and most solemn specimen of Christ's preaching. And what has it exhibited? Regeneration by the Holy Spirit—redemption by the sacrifice of Christ—and salvation by faith in his name. These, then, must be the most prominent features, the most decisive characteristics of the preaching of the Gospel. How vain should it be to prescribe to us another course! Why does one say to us, "Preach moral duties;" another, "Unfold the eternal decrees;" a third, "Describe the Christian's experience;" and a fourth, "Unfold the roll of prophecy?" These things, indeed, should have their turns; but the standing themes of our ministry are here marked out, and all others will have their best effects, in proportion as these enjoy their due precedence.

Here we are warned, that though you should applaud us as teachers come from God, we must instantly remind you, that you must also be hearers born of God; that though you were to admire us as angels from heaven, we must not take this as a proof of your salvation; but must, in all fidelity to your souls, warn you, again and again, that you must be born again. And how consoling is it to see the first solemn annunciation of this truth prove "a savour of life," and the preaching of regeneration, become the means of producing the happy change! The man who began with loud objections, closes with silent submission; and he who stole into the audience of Christ, under cover of night, goes away to own him before an opposing world.

But as the first effect of regenerating grace is a deep sense of ruin, he that detects our danger discovers our remedy, and cries, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Then, the same renovating influence that humbled us, restores us to peace; and never is it certain that our alarms are the effect of a saving change, till repentance towards God has been followed by faith to-wards our Lord Jesus Christ. To this, then, we urge you, with all the eagerness of solicitude that is demanded by an affair that forms the test of your character, the hinge on which your salvation turns. Prove, then, that your faith is of that genuine kind, which works by love; and "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, giving himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." Having learned at the feet of Christ, with this Rabbi, the words of eternal life, let us, like him, show our faith by our works, bringing our choicest spices, our most costly sacrifices, to the foot of the cross, and saying, "Of thine own we give thee, for ourselves, our all, are thine,"

LECTURE III.

CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

JOHN iv. 1-26.

Our Lord was now showing himself, for the first time, to the Samaritans, who, standing in an equivocal position, between Jew and Gentile, were favoured with some share of the ministry of him, who was not sent to the heathen, but "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But who would not have expected, and wished, that he should show himself to advantage? Though he might not have gone among them, as the Jews fondly hoped their Messiah would come, in worldly pomp and military array, he might, at least, have made his appearance amidst these strangers, surrounded by a vast crowd of attentive disciples, and followed by a train of suppliants, whose diseases vanished at his word or touch. Instead of this, the first time he is seen by a Samaritan, he is sitting alone, upon the ground, by a well, as a weary, way-worn, thirsting, solitary traveller, who, instead of bestowing the favours of a God, is begging for a drop of water.

We declaim against the false and worldly expectations of the Jews, and yet we imitate them; for when we hear of Christ's preaching, we think of a numerous audience, of a lofty pulpit, and a sublime oration. But here, all is humble; the audience, a single person, a poor woman, of doubtful character; the pulpit is the ground, and the sermon, a simple, though invaluable conversation. For, as many a stream of fine water, which is a treasure to an empire, issues from a low crevice in a rock; from this lowly site flowed a discourse that was like a "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal;" and while a sermon delivered in a splendid edifice to admiring crowds, is often afterwards found to have died away in empty sounds, this was followed by effects more splendid than the most eloquently recorded victories,

and more lasting than the benefits of the mightiest revolution of empires. The most inauspicious appearance terminates triumphantly; and, without pomp or noise, the word of the Redeemer's lips wins the Samaritan to the God, the Messiah, the worship of the Jews. Let us, then, so listen, that we also may share in the blessings which the discourse was designed to confer—elevation of mind—conviction of sin—and instruction in righteousness.

I. Elevation of mind: v. 7-15.

Against the bad taste of what is called allegorising, the world loudly declaims. But while we own, that both good taste and good sense have been offended by those who hunt after the spiritual, to the neglect of the literal sense of Scripture, we must never forget, that such is the constitution of the human mind, such the mode in which we derive our ideas, and such the nature of true eloquence, that a judicious use of the relation between physical and intellectual things, is an essential element of the most efficient instruction. With this view, rather than for the sake of slaking his thirst, our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, who came to draw water at Jacob's well, "Give me to drink." She, perceiving from his dress, or speech, or manner, that he was a Jew, said, "How is it that thou askest drink of me; since the Jews avoid all kind intercourse with the Samaritans:" for which alienation from other people, they were reproached by the ancient classics, as a morose nation, the enemies of all the rest of the human race. If the early conduct of the Samaritans, recorded in the book of Nehemiah, rendered them odious to the Jews, it was still a gross violation of all religion to keep up the national hatred,* and shun that intercourse by which they might have instructed the ignorant, and recovered those "who were out of the way." Our Lord, therefore, taught this woman, that he was so far from partaking of this spirit, that "if she knew the gift of God, and who it was that asked water, she would have asked of him, and he would have given her living water."

^{*} Wolf. in loc. quotes Raschi, saying, "It is unlawful to eat the bread of a Samaritan, and drink his wine: כותי אסור לאכל פתו ולשחות יינו

The Redeemer seems to mention two things which she needed to know; but Beza, and others, think that they both mean Christ himself, who, in the first instance, is called the gift of God, which, in the second, is explained to mean, him that was asking for drink. But, though the Saviour is the son given, it is not probable that he would, on this occasion, call himself the gift, when he, through the whole discourse, exhibited himself as the giver. Nor can I think that the meaning, for which Campbell, with his usual good sense, pleads, is the true one; for it is not clear, that the Greek word, δωρεά, ever means the bounty, or beneficence, of a person's character; and, if it did, the correspondent Syriac word, employed probably by our Lord, had not that latitude. if she had known the gift and the giver, the Holy Spirit, and the Saviour, who came to impart it to us, she would have seized this opportunity to obtain that first of blessings. In a subsequent passage of this Gospel, we find our Lord promising living water, in similar terms; and we are expressly informed, "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." For water, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, stand together in Scripture, as the sign and the thing signified; the word of God sometimes employing the external application to exhibit the purifying influences of the Spirit; and sometimes the internal use of water to set forth the power of the Holy Spirit, to impart and maintain spiritual life, and satisfy our thirst after the chief good. In the last sense, the figure is employed here, as it is by the Prophet Isaiah, when he says, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

But this knowledge was too wonderful for the woman of Samaria, and therefore she asked no favour of him who was able and willing to bestow the greatest. Such are the melancholy consequences of ignorance. Yet what consolations are veiled under the delicate manner in which our Saviour told her what she needed to know! For we not only see the power and glory of him that can give the Holy Spirit to whom he pleases, but also learn that such is his grace, that we need only to know him, in order to put our trust in him, and

ask and receive the living water. There is the golden chain of life; if thou knowest Christ, thou wilt ask his Spirit; and if thou wilt ask, he will give. Our ignorance prevents our asking, and "we have not, because we ask not."

How much this woman needed the influences of the Divine Spirit, to raise her mind from earthly to heavenly things, is manifest by her reply: "Sir, thou hast no bucket, and the well is deep; from whence, then, hast thou that living water?" She took that phrase in the sense in which it is often employed, not only in Scripture and by the Jewish writers in general, but also by the Greek and Latin classics, as signifying running water, in distinction from that which is called dead, because it is stagnant. But, as it was observed on another occasion, that Peter "knew not what he said," this was manifestly the case with the woman before us; so that we must not wonder that we can make no consistent sense, either of these words or of those which follow-" Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" She seems to have been chiefly ambitious of bringing in Jacob, to claim him as her father, aware that the Jews despised her nation as a spurious race. If she had any other definite meaning, she may have asked whether Jesus professed to be greater than Jacob; because he seemed to promise better water, and she knew not whence he could procure it.

Our Lord virtually replies, that he is greater than Jacob, who, dying, declared that he had "waited for Christ's salvation." All patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and even angels, yield to Christ "the pre-eminence." None can give the Spirit of life, but that Saviour in whom "all fulness dwells." For the blessing of water we should be grateful to the God of providence; but we know that the virtue of the refreshing draught is soon exhausted, and we are left in the same wretched, perishing state as before we drank. Not so, says our Lord, is it with him "that drinketh of the water that I shall give, for he shall never thirst; but the water that I give, shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life." Thirst is employed to signify both a want and a desire; and the two

are combined in the sense of need. The first working of faith in Christ assumes the form of longing after him, "as the hart panteth after the water brook;" but as faith becomes strong, and rises to assurance, we cease to feel as if dying for want of him, and enjoy the satisfaction that is compared to the influence of "cold water on a thirsty stomach." Never again shall the believer be destitute of that Saviour who is the fountain of life. In this world, we shall always derive from him what is necessary to sustain our religion; and, in the next, all that will afford perfect bliss. But the grace of the Holy Spirit shall be in the believer, as a fountain, springing up, always active, energetic, diffusive, and affording blessings to others, until the bliss of heaven shall crown the religion of earth. In this way our Lord is accustomed to recommend religion, on account of its perpetuity; and if we could suppose that the divine life imparted by the Holy Spirit, could be entirely extinct, the opposition which our Lord here expresses between the streams of nature and of grace would be lost.

Might we not have expected that the eyes of this woman would have been opened to see that no literal spring was intended? But she still farther shows, that "the carnal mind understandeth not the things of the Spirit;" for she says, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." She must have had some strange undefinable notion of the importance of Christ and his gifts, that he could save her for ever from thirst and from the want of water. It is, however, to be feared, that some irony was mingled with this speech; and that, together with a very faint portion of that faith that produced obedience to the hint that she should ask, and he would give living water, there was also the struggling of unbelief that tempts God, by asking, in order to see what will follow. Our heart-searching High Priest, therefore, checked the dangerous workings of unbelief, and gave the conversation that turn which would bring down the proud rebellious spirit at his feet. For the next verses show how he produced

II. Conviction of sin: v. 16-19.

Having sought to elevate the woman's mind from earthly to heavenly blessings, the Saviour now designs to create a thirst for the waters of life, which is most effectually accomplished, by disclosing to us our state as sinners. This, God often effects in the mode adopted here.

1. Discovering one particular sin.

By saving to her, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither," he elicited the confession, "I have no husband." At first sight, Jesus seems to betray, either ignorance, or misapplication of terms; for if he knew she had no husband, why did he speak as if he thought she had? But the Greek uses the general word, man, for husband, which is known to be the meaning by the addition of the possessive pronoun. To a certain extent, the Latin has the same idiom, and the French uses the same term, with regard to woman and wife. The Syriac word for husband is equally equivocal, signifying also, Lord, or master. While, therefore, Christ's language did not necessarily mean more than the man with whom she lived, she chose to take it in the stricter sense, that gave her an opportunity of contradiction. This turned to her shame; for he replied, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly." It has been supposed, that her having had so many husbands was the effect of her lewdness, causing her to be divorced; but of this there is no evidence, as she might have lost them by death. But the man with whom she was now living, is pronounced not her husband; not because one of her former husbands was living, for then she would have had a husband, and would have been reproved as an adultress; nor because the man had another wife, since polygamy was then lawful; but, doubtless, because no solemn matrimonial engagement of fidelity to this man had been entered into by her. For, while neither the Old Testament, nor the New, makes marriage a religious sacrament, the sanctity of the bond, and the good of society require, that the parties should enter into a solemn engagement, before witnesses, to be faithful to each other. But, by telling her to call her husband and come to him,

that he might speak to them both together, Christ, in effect, told her, that she should not live with any man whom she could not present before him, that, "as heirs together of the grace of life," they might listen together to the words of life; and she, by her answer, confessed that she was living in an unlawful connexion with a man who was not her husband. "Be sure your sin will find you out," says the Prophet; and often it is by our own lips that we are, not only finally convicted, but at first accused. Such is the combination of delicacy and force in the moral government of God. Who can mark the turn which the conversation now takes, and not admire the operation of Christ's omniscience, who detects, not only the past life of this woman, but the present sin in which she was living? See the clearness and decision with which he lays naked the fact which she chose to hint, but did not wish to confess and forsake. How meek and mild is this reprover, who, without bitterness and reproaches, brings to bear upon her heart and conscience the sins of a life! What mercy is mingled with justice, that they may both operate to make her long for the waters of life which he waited to bestow!

"Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet," she exclaimed, convinced that he knew, as she afterwards said, "all that ever she had done." The light let in by a single crevice may show the impurity of a whole room; and Paul was led to know his sinfulness by that one commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." This woman was touched on the point of chastity, that the wounded nerve might make the whole frame vibrate with pangs of contrition. For chastity is the test of female character, and she who fails here has lost the guard of all the virtues; though the love of God gives no countenance to the partiality of the laws of society, which exempt men from censures that are poured on females, without mercy. But who would not be convicted of guilt, if the living word, that is "quick and powerful," should bring to bear upon us the beams of that purity and omniscience, to which we are all "naked and open?" When he convinces us of one sin, we should consider this as a specimen, both of our character

and of his knowledge of it; that he can tell us all that ever we did.

Our Lord proceeds in his work of conviction by

2. Showing the irreligion of her whole state: v. 20-24.

I imagine that the woman was actuated by mixed motives in saying what follows. She felt uneasy, and wished to turn from a painful subject; but, glad to find that she had the privilege of conversing with a prophet who could tell her all that she wished to know, she seized this opportunity of seeking information on a question fiercely debated between her nation and the Jews: "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain; but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Here, again, she shows the conflict between good and evil in her breast; not resenting the discovery of her sin, nor attempting to dispute its truth, but showing that she considered a prophet sent by the omniscient God to be able to detect, as Samuel did, what was in the heart,* she sought from Christ information concerning the acceptable way of worshipping God. Yet, instead of opening her whole soul to the conviction of sin, and seeking mercy to pardon, and grace to put away iniquity, she turns to a question of rites and places, as if these were more important than the worship of the heart.

Manasseh had built a temple on Mount Gerizim, which was near to Shechem, for Jotham went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and cried, "Hearken to me, ye men of Shechem." Heart though that temple was destroyed by Hyrcanus, one of the Maccabean heroes, the Samaritans still worshipped towards that spot, as they are said to do to this day. For, by "the fathers," she meant the holy Patriarchs, claiming the privileges of Jews of pure blood, and alluding to the worship which the ancients offered on mountains. The Samaritans thought Gerizim was the mount on which Abraham built an altar, and that God commanded Israel to pronounce the blessings there, ‡ and to erect an altar. § The Hebrew says, Mount Ebal, but the Samaritan Pentateuch

[‡] Deut. xxvii. 12.

[§] Deut. xxvii. 2-7.

and version have changed this into Gerizim. Other fables also they "received by tradition from their fathers," which it would be a waste of time to repeat. Against all that was said for this mount, as a place sacred to God's worship, the Jews opposed the command to have but one place of sacrifice, which God should choose. This, at first, was Shilo, but the sins committed there caused it to be rejected, and Jerusalem was finally consecrated as the holy place.* But the Samaritans, by rejecting every part of the Old Testament, except the five books of Moses, treated all the evidence in favour of Jerusalem with contempt. Yet it was of importance that they should be set right on this point; for Christ was promised as the Lord who should suddenly come to his temple at Jerusalem, and the Samaritans had, by rejecting the inspired Scriptures, involved themselves in great darkness concerning the promised Messiah.

Our Lord, however, instead of acting as a mere Jew, by exalting the temple of Jerusalem above Mount Gerizim, turned the whole current of her thoughts to more spiritual views of religion: "Woman, believe me." For the word preached does not profit, except it be mixed with faith in them that hear it; and "faith cometh by hearing." But Jesus proposed himself as the object of faith, calling her off from the traditions of her fathers and her own false reasonings, to believe him, who was not a mere man that might lie, but the God of truth, and the great prophet, whom even those Scriptures which the Samaritans retained had promised, saying, "It shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that prophet shall be cut off." "Whosoever receiveth his testimony has set to his seal that God is true." Other prophets said, "Hear the word of the Lord;"—Jesus, "I say to you:"-others claimed credence to the word which the Lord spake by them—Jesus said, "Believe me." To this woman such a charge gave a test of the sincerity of her confession that he was a prophet; and he, regarding her as a chosen sheep, in whose heart grace was beginning to operate, em-

^{*} Josh. xviii. 1; Jer. vii. 11; 1 Kings, viii. 16.

ploys the grand means of bringing her into possession of all the blessings of the new covenant, by inspiring her with a full confidence in himself. When accompanied with the Holy Spirit, the word that demands, inspires, faith. This word. "believe me," was a comment on those of David, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider; forget thine own people and thy father's house." "The hour cometh, when ye shall, neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." For Jerusalem, with its temple, was about to be laid in ruins, and the Jews, who doated on it, would be no longer able to worship there; while the Samaritans, converted to the Christian faith, would no more hearken to the tradition of their fathers concerning Mount Gerizim. But the grand error was. not so much the place, as the object of worship. All genuine worshippers would, in the hour that was coming, adore God as a father, reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ. "Ye worship ye know not what." Many strange things are said of the superstition and idolatry of the Samaritans, which, however, cannot all be proved; but our Saviour shows, that by rejecting the inspired Prophets, and the appointed worship of God's temple, and by "mingling with the heathen, and learning their works," the Samaritans had fallen into gross ignorance of God. This was a terrible blow to her fancied religion, and brands with just reprobation the profane maxim, that ignorance is the mother of devotion. The Saviour of men here "smites the earth with the rod of his mouth," when it adopts the latitudinarian notion, that all religions are equally capable of conferring salvation on those who sincerely follow them. The conviction of this sinner was now rendered complete, when she was informed, that she was not only living in an illicit connexion, but that her very religion, about which she seemed so zealous, was all vain. Nothing so truly humbles us as to hear the voice of God say of those devotions in which we had trusted for righteousness, "Who hath required this at your hands?"

But as it is not enough to know wherein we are wrong, our Saviour proceeds to give

III. Instruction in righteousness: v. 22-26.

If the word and Spirit of God merely tore from us our false hopes, without inspiring us with what is called "a good hope through grace," we might well shrink from their searching operation. The Spirit, however, convinceth, not only of sin, but of righteousness too. The Saviour now proceeds to show his hearer

1. The nature of true religion: v. 22-24.

It is an axiom, that the worshipper and the worship will always be like the Deity adored. Our Lord says, "we know what we worship, including himself in the genuine church of God; for he, as a man, worshipped "his Father, and our Father, his God and our God." The Prophets foretold, and the Evangelists record, his prayers and praises. He had fellowship with us in worship, and we should, in ours, hold fellowship with him. He knew what he worshipped; for on him rested "the Spirit of wisdom, that made him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." With himself, he joins the spiritual worshippers among the Jews, who had the oracles of God, those who feared the Lord, on whom the sun of righteousness rose, some of whom "departed not from the temple, instantly serving God, night and day."

For salvation is of the Jews, or from the Jews rather,* because Christ, who is called salvation+, as being its author, came forth from the nation of the Jews. This was the crown of their numerous and lofty privileges, that "of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever."

They said, indeed, that the world could no more subsist without Israel, than without the air and the four winds; yet they knew not him from whom all their glory proceeded. But Christ, having lived and died among them, sent forth his word from Jerusalem, where he first formed the beginning of his kingdom, the church that "is the mother of us all." "Ten men, out of all languages of the nations," says Zechariah, "shall take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew, saying,

^{* &#}x27;Εκ τῶν 'Ιουδαίων.

[†] Acts xiii. 47, "that thou shouldst be for salvation, or a Saviour, to the ends of the earth."

we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you;" alluding to the meaning of the name Immanuel, God with us.* Thus Japheth, or the God of Japheth, dwells in the tents of Shem, and Abraham becomes "the father of many nations;" and thus the Samaritan was taught to seek salvation from him that was a Jew.

Still farther, to cure her of her false notions, the Saviour teaches the woman, that the hour was coming, or rather was already come, when the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth. By the mention of true worshippers, he taught her that all others were considered false; for what they valued themselves upon was, in the sight of God, no worship at all; so that, by his Prophet, he compares their several rites to so many crimes, or odious acts; "he that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man, and he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck."+ But the true worshippers are those who view him as a Spirit, and pay to him the homage of that spiritual and immortal principle, the soul, by which we are made after his image. They do this "in truth," having true views of God's character, as revealed in Christ, and presenting themselves before him, not in mere appearance, but in heartfelt sincerity, according to the true way of access to him through the Mediator. † Not, however, that we are to suppose God was not formerly thus worshipped, since true religion is identical in all ages; but the larger effusions of the Spirit under the Gospel, and the more spiritual nature of this religion, would render the worshippers more eminently spiritual and sincere. With the rejection of false worship, it was consoling to the hearer of Christ, to be informed that the Father was, not as some of the heathen taught, indifferent to the services of men, but that he sought for true worship-

^{*} Zech. viii. 23. † Isaiah lxvi. 3.

[‡] If I thought that any thing farther was intended by our Lord, I should prefer that paraphrase which Wolf has quoted from Olearius; "for the carnal ministry, both of Zion and Gerizim, being abolished, men shall approach no more by such carnal priesthood; but by that true High Priest, who, not after the shadow, but in truth, not by a carnal oblation, but by his own eternal spirit, shall offer himself to God."

pers. We may, indeed, justly wonder, that the Infinite One should seek our services. For what can he need, or we give? Yet the Son of his love has assured us, that he seeks true worshippers among men; his eye searching them out, and his heart graciously regarding their persons and devotions. If, then, it is to his pleasure and glory to receive, it is immensely to our interest that he should find such in us.

For God is a spirit. This is the glorious peculiarity of the Sacred Scriptures; that, while the whole world, even the most cultivated and philosophical nations, were devoted to material deities, the inspired writings imparted the only rational and philosophical, the only true doctrine—the spirituality of God. For matter essentially implies properties that are inconsistent with eternity, infinity, and rationality, which are included in the idea of deity. He is the Father of spirits, and therefore it is necessary to pay to him the homage of the spirits, that he has imparted to us. Let these sayings sink down into our ears, and be fresh in our minds, whenever we approach to worship.

Our Divine Teacher now both gives and takes occasion to teach

2. The only acceptable medium of worship, which is Christ. This woman, struck with the truth and importance of the Redeemer's words, seems anxious to show that she was not so entirely ignorant of religion as might be supposed, and therefore tells him, that she knew Messiah was coming; and, as to what she knew not, she hoped he would teach her all things; at the same time, perhaps, designing to hint, that the light which Jesus had poured on her mind led her to suspect he was the very person. This was, however, probably accompanied with a latent wish to excuse her own darkness, saying, "how should we know any better, till that great Teacher for whom we are waiting shall come?" She seems to have been in the dubious state of those who said, "Art thou he that shall come, or do we look for another?" Our Lord, therefore, graciously relieved her, by saying, "I that speak unto thee, am He." "Though I stand here, speaking to a sinful woman, and have asked of her a draught of water, I

am that great promised Teacher, that can tell you every thing, and give you the living water that will save you from cternal thirst." How mysterious are the ways of God! Who would have expected that this woman would be chosen to be the honoured recipient of the first clear and open declaration of Christ's Messiahship? Now, she saw him by whom she became a true worshipper, such as the Father seeks; she beheld the Lamb of God, the great propitiation for all the sins, which he had exposed to her terrified conscience. That he told her more than is here recorded, we may well suppose. In this discovery, made blessed herself, she sought to become a blessing to others; for, leaving her water pot, and disregarding all temporal affairs, she ran to the city, saying, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" The rest of the narrative has been illustrated in the Lecture on this part of the life of Christ.

Let us close our meditations on this discourse by two reflections.

I. On the spirituality of God and his worship.

When Christ came, the world was sunken in idolatry and superstition. The heathen were "mad upon their idols," besotted with the adoration of "graven images, the work of their own hands;" and the Jews were, as a nation, doating upon rites and ceremonies, losing, amidst the splendour of the signs, all sight of the very thing signified. See, then, a world, whose remedy was turned into a fatal disease, whose religion was its ruin. How welcome should be the sight of that sovereign, infallible Physician, who alone can restore health to the universally disordered frame! With what simplicity, what energy, what authority, he announces the grand truth, "God is a spirit!" Taught by such a voice, how clear is our conviction of this vital doctrine, how powerful our sense of its importance! With what indignant zeal should we repel every thing that would obscure its evidence, or enfeeble its influence! Away, then, with pictures and images of him, who says, "What likeness will ye make of me?"

For as all other existence springs from that of God, all religion arises out of just views of God. The world has been, for

ages, suffering under the consequences of the sin denounced by the Apostle who wrote to the head of the heathen world.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator; who is blessed for ever. Amen."*

For, when "the truth of God is changed into a lie," the wholesome effect of the knowledge of God is exchanged for the direct disease. Who can read what the Greeks and Romans say of the amours and crimes of their gods, and not perceive how fearfully society must have been poisoned by such theology? Who that thinks of the obscene displays attendant on the car of Juggernaut, can wonder at the lewdness of the inhabitants of India? But, if we turn from thence to console ourselves with the sublime doctrine of Christianity, that God is a pure spirit, we must remember that the efficacy of that truth depends upon the authority with which it is promulgated. Various and profound were the speculations of the ancient philosophers on the nature of God and of morals; and much important truth was elicited by the master minds of Greece and Rome, and of the eastern world: but all was inefficacious, because all was mere speculation. We admire the copious and various knowledge displayed by Cicero in his book on the nature of the gods; but we lay it down, saying, "No wonder that such philosophy did nothing; for the people saw that their teachers were groping in the

^{*} Romans i. 20-25.

dark, and were themselves uncertain whether their finest theories were not mere golden dreams." This, then, stamps value on the truth which the Gospel reveals concerning God, that it is delivered with the absolute certainty of infallible authority, which compels us to bow as to the lively oracles of Deity. What gratitude should we feel when we say, "We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding of him that is true!"

That our worship should be conformed to the God to whom it is paid, is manifestly proper. They who made gods of wood and stone, silver and gold, honoured them with temples of such materials; and the heathen often defend their criminal and abominable worship by the examples of their gods. Shall, then, such deities be more powerful for evil than the living and true God for good? Since our God is a spirit, should we not speak of him, as the Apostle did; " Whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son?" With what spirituality, what sincerity, what purity, should we adore him! Whenever we bow our bodies before him, we should "take heed to our spirits;" for we are all tainted with the disease of insincerity and carnality, which has so universally corrupted religion into rites and ceremonies, injurious to ourselves and dishonourable to God. Nothing is harder than to avoid sinking into formality in our worship. It requires the constant exercise of the most vigilant jealousy; though our previous reasonings would have led us to conclude, that we should either not pretend to worship God at all, or do it in the only way in which it can be agreeable to him and useful to us. But as we all have inherited that fallen nature which contains within itself the seeds of the disease that has perverted religion, in all ages and nations; we never rise superior to the wide wasting evil, but by the mighty "power of the Spirit of God." Let us, then, enter upon the second reflection.

2. On the vital influence which inspires the religion that God approves.

To her who came to draw water, to satisfy her bodily appetites, our divine Teacher makes known another want

under which she had always suffered, but which she had never yet felt-the living water, that saves us from eternal thirst. So marked is this doctrine of an influence from the Holy Spirit on our minds, so high is its rank in the religion of Jesus, that if we know not the Spirit, we are ignorant of Christ. When some professed disciples said, "we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost, Paul asked, Unto what, then, were ye baptised? And they said, unto John's baptism."* By the baptism of Christ we are dedicated equally "to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." In vain would the Redeemer have enjoined spiritual worship, if he had not given the spirit of worship, the vital principle of all genuine religion. But when we hear him say, " If you had asked, I would have given," we should reply, "Then, Lord, I ask; give me that living water." If we are ignorant of its value and our need; if we are so indifferent to the blessing as not to pant for it, we are destitute of it; and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" he is not among the true worshippers whom the Father seeks; but worships, he knows not what, nor why, nor how.

But as our gracious Redeemer came to procure for us this blessing with the blood of his heart, and has ascended to shed the Spirit from his royal throne, assuring us that, if we ask, we shall receive it; we ought to make this the object of our incessant and most fervent prayer.

No traveller in desert lands Should pant for water more.

For such is the blessing, that we should pray for it, not as if it were one among the favours we need, but *the* blessing, by emphasis. Since Christ, who previously held that rank,

* It is, however, probable that we should here, as in many other instances, repeat the previous verb, and read, "We have not heard that the Holy Spirit is received;" for we cannot suppose that even John's disciples knew nothing about the Holy Spirit, since he prophesied of Christ as he that should come and baptise with the Holy Ghost. But these men may not have heard that the Spirit was given at Pentecost.

is now come, what we at present need to ask, is, that Spirit which makes him known, applies his redemption to our hearts, and enables to come in his name to the Father, in spirit and in truth; "for through Christ," says the Apostle, "we have access by one Spirit to the Father. To have a fountain of divine and saving influences opened to us, and to be invited to come and draw thence with joy, is such a privilege, that we should tremble at the thought, not merely of rendering it all abortive by absolute neglect, but of receiving only a scanty supply, through the faintness of our desires and the weakness of our faith.

How welcome should be this assurance of our Lord, "That he will give us what shall be in us, a well of water springing up to everlasting life!" We must know that we have not, without this divine gift, any living spring of grace. For how soon we lose our finest views, our best impressions, our most delightful frames, our holiest resolutions! Mere chameleons, we change with every alteration of our position, or our circumstances. Our first father soon lost the glory of his original creation; and angels equally proved, that they had not in themselves the living spring of endless holy life; so that we may be assured, that perpetuity in good is not the native possession of any creature. No language, then, can do justice to the value of this gift of Christ-" the Holy Spirit to abide with us for ever." This alone can assure us of the perpetuity of holiness and bliss, in heaven itself. But, with this spring, we shall at last thirst no more, nor need to come to draw water from ordinances, as wells of salvation; but may for ever sing to the Eternal Spirit of grace, as Israel once did, to a far inferior source,-

"Spring up, O well."

LECTURE IV.

THE FIRST ON CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATT. v. 1-16.

ON TRUE HAPPINESS.

When the preacher is Jesus Christ, all would say that the pulpit should be, like that at Sinai, the lofty mountain; and the audience, not merely a whole nation, like Israel, but a world. He had now roused attention, and given such proofs of a divine mission, that it was naturally asked, "what new doctrine is this? For with authority, he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they obey him;" so that the high tone of supremacy which marks this discourse is supported by adequate deeds. What was so well timed, has been, from the place where it was delivered, called the Sermon on the Mount. The hill denominated the Mount of the Beatitudes, is on the south of Tabor, which, however, may itself have been the spot honoured by this discourse. The canopy of heaven stretched over the preacher's head; the thousands of immortal beings spread out before him; and the scenes of nature, including mountain, plain, and lake, suggested to him many of those beautiful and striking illustrations which impress the sermon on the memory and heart. As his disciples came up, closer perhaps than the rest of the audience, to them he directs his first attention, teaching them their own happiness, which was crowned with the honour of usefulness.

Here we are taught,

I. The happiness of holiness, the description of which extends to v. 12.

This is the first grand thing for man to know, his chief end, which is "to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever." But though we naturally ask, "Who will shew us any good?" we are so misled by false pretences, that we fall into misery and ruin by putting evil for good. He that knows who are the truly happy men, has taken an important step towards being ranked among them. Our Redeemer seizes the opportunity afforded by the position in which he was placed, to correct the fatal errors of man on the important science of bliss; for we may here, as on most other occasions, find a clue to the meaning of the words, by adverting to the circumstances of the time. The several ingredients in our happiness are generally called, from a Latin word, the beatitudes; and as they are eight in number, we shall pursue them in their order.

The first beatitude, or ingredient in real bliss, is poverty of spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

Mark, my friends, how the first sentence which the preacher utters convinces us that he "is from heaven, and not of men;" for his doctrine is not "earthly and sensual," but heavenly and spiritual. He contradicts the world, and asserts that a man's happiness does not depend on what he has, but on what he is. Seeing the multitudes, and observing that the poor were half ashamed to be seen in their mean attire, which they attempted to conceal by little arts, or to set off by vain airs, envying those whose more respectable appearance emboldened them to come near, and thus showing, that though poor in appearance, they were proud in spirit, Jesus said, "Happy those who are poor, not merely in circumstances, but in spirit." To understand this expression, think what you would feel, if you were poor in the temporal and literal sense; then transfer all the shame arising from the meanness of your condition and appearance, all your sense of the misery of want and of dependence on the bounty of others, and of obligation for the relief you might obtain, to the state of your soul, as exposed to shame in consequence of your depravity; to danger on account of your guilt; to dependence on the mercy of God for your relief, by pardon; and on his grace for your recovery, by regeneration and sanctification, and then think of the obligation you must feel to the grace that saved you—and you will have entered into the very spirit of poverty. If this is not mere imagination, but genuine conviction and heartfelt sensation, you are "poor in spirit."*

Happy are they who are thus poor, in the very spirit of their minds; for they are rich, even to the possession of a kingdom; that heavenly empire, the reign of grace, which Christ came to set up in the heart, and which will end in

* This view of the import of the phrase is commended, as well as illustrated, by an anecdote that is related of the celebrated Dr. Johnson. It is said that he was giving his interpretation of this passage to a pious friend, who objected to it, as implying self-gratulation. Johnson replied, "Well, how can a man possess this quality, without knowing it, and thinking the better of himself for it?" Then said the friend, "This poverty of spirit commits a felo de se, and becomes pride of spirit." The interpretation given above was then proposed, and Johnson, after a solemn pause, exclaimed, "You are right, sir; nothing but that can be called poverty of spirit."

This interpretation does not differ essentially from that of Campbell, though I cannot approve of his paraphrastic translation—"The poor who do not repine." I should rather say, "Poor in their own estimation, or have a poor opinion of themselves;" for I take the word spirit here, to mean conscience, or consciousness; as when it is said, "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts." The correspondent passage in Luke vi. 16—49, omits the words "in spirit;" so that we are left to think of poverty alone, but evidently in all its emphasis, which I have endeavoured to describe in the text. Grostête, whom we may call the Protestant bishop of Lincoln, though he died in 1253, says, on these words, "Poverty of spirit disposes a man to feel that he has nothing but what he receives from above. But Adam in innocence might have felt this. The humility of a sinner goes deeper; to own that, self-condemned and corrupt before God, he finds life, and health, and strength, in Christ alone."

† That the phrase, kingdom of heaven, means here, and in most other passages of the New Testament, the reign of grace, rather than that of glory; or the dominion of religion in the heart, not the state of glory in heaven, may be inferred, from the way in which Daniel foretells the

the kingdom of glory. For they, and they alone, are admitted into the heavenly empire, who are brought to feel their obligation to divine charity, sovereign grace; and they are saved from the vexing and chafing of the proud spirits. who scorn to be saved by mere mercy; from the miseries of spiritual pride; which is often betrayed by those who profess great zeal for the doctrines of grace, but prove themselves to have missed true bliss, by the conceit and bitterness, which make them wretched themselves, and a source of misery to others. If the happiness of poverty should seem to any a paradox, let them remember that the reign of heaven established in the heart, will freely supply the need which we are brought to feel, and will at length conduct us to the heaven where we shall find ourselves rich in the consciousness of being made priests and kings, and in the assurance of the eternity of our bliss. For this, like all the other discourses of Christ, proceeds upon the true principle that our happiness lies, not in the circumstances and feelings of the present moment, but in the whole state of our being, when eternity is taken into the account; for they only are happy men, who will be so for ever.

I own that our proud hearts abhor poverty, and revolt at it, as misery, rather than bliss. Yet no more of the spirit of poverty is enjoined in religion than is required in order to accord with the truth of our state; and what does it avail to expose ourselves to the reproach, "Thou sayest, I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and hast need of everything?" And is it not to our advantage to enter into the spirit of our poverty, in order to be enriched with a kingdom, and that a heavenly

setting up of Christ's kingdom. Chap. ii. 44. "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." In Matt. iii. 2, John the Baptist announces the appearance of Christ, saying, "The reign of heaven has come near." For $\beta \alpha \sigma \iota \lambda \epsilon \iota \alpha$ should be rendered reign, rather than kingdom; since it is scarcely sense to speak of a kingdom coming; and the reign of a prince is that which is intended.

one, rather than, by a false conceit of our merit, and of our claim to wealth and indulgence, to be shut out of that kingdom, and left eternally poor?

The second beatitude is still more paradoxical, "Happy are they who are mourning; for they shall be comforted:" v. 4.

As Christ's preaching is "like the hammer that breaks the rock," he, perhaps, saw some mournful countenances, whose falling tears told of a broken heart. But to say, "happy are they that mourn," seems like affirming that they are happy who are miserable. Yet our real condition may be happy, when our present frame is sorrowful; for if we were mourning over the ruin of our fortunes, while a friend had pitied our distress and settled on us a liberal income, might it not be justly said, "happy are you that mourn." A broken heart is a phrase expressive of the excess of grief; but since "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise;" "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The tears of godly sorrow, which are the attendants of repentance, appear to the angels as the dew drops of the morning, the forerunners of the rising of "the sun of righteousness on the soul, with healing in his wings." However bitter is the grief of the mourner for sin, and no tongue can adequately describe it, he will infallibly taste God's pardoning love; and David describeth "the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." For, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."*

All that are now truly happy, date their bliss from the moment when the heart of stone, being turned to flesh, began to feel, and ache, and bleed for sin; and wherever they see one begin to mourn at the foot of the cross, they

wait not till he shall taste the consolation of forgiveness, but pronounce him, even now, happier than when committing sin, in the road to ruin. The consolation of forgiveness as richly repays the sorrows of repentance, as the joys of heaven will counterpoise the afflictions of earth.

The third beatitude is that of the meek: v. 5. "Happy are they; for they shall inherit the earth."

In a crowd, we see men of forward, proud spirits, push their way, and jostle out of their place the meek, and gentle, and yielding. Some there were, perhaps, mourning that they were thus thrown into the rear, where they could not so well see or hear the heavenly Teacher. But he casts his eye upon them, and calls the meek happy, as he had in his ancient word reproached "those who call the proud happy." Meekness may be best expressed by its opposite, irritability and passion; and by what a pious man once said to a passionate father, "Sir, if you don't learn meekness from Jesus Christ, your children will learn madness from you." No wonder that Christ pronounces the meek blessed; for they are like himself, who said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." Who thinks of the blessed in heaven, without conceiving of them as meek and gentle spirits? For who could hope to be happy among them, if they were not so? Who can reflect on his own temper, and not feel conscious that he is happy in proportion as he obeys the voice that says, " seek meekness;" and that whenever he is betrayed into a contrary spirit, he is punished by perturbation within, and by the shame with which he looks back on his wrath?

I know that to some it appears misery, to be obliged to submit meekly to injuries, and not be allowed to indulge our passions and our pride in the stiff maintenance of our rights, and the lofty assertion of our own honours. But look in the face of one who is gentle as the Lamb of God, and compare it with the countenance of the fierce and revengeful, and say, which of these is the index of bliss? Our Lord shows us, that though we may seem by our meekness to be pushed out of our place, and trampled upon by the proud, we shall

eventually find that every thing shall give way to us, for we "shall inherit the earth." This is a quotation from the Psalmist,* who charges us "not to fret ourselves; for that is only to do evil." Even now the meek find that all things, even the whole earth, is theirs, inasmuch as it is their Father's, who has taught them to approve of his allotments, and who has promised that "all things shall work together for their good." When, by the triumph of Christian principles, wars and violence shall cease, the whole earth will be literally the inheritance of the meek. If you ask, how could this make those happy who were then hearing Christ? I answer, that Christians in every age enjoy the thought that God will finally make such persons heirs of the paradisaic earth. When the proud, fierce, and ambitious, who have attempted to seize dominion by the sword, have perished by the sword, the world shall be swayed and possessed by those who have calmly deferred their inheritance to their Father's time, and sought it in his holy way.

The fourth beatitude is that of "those who hunger and thirst, but it is after righteousness; and they shall be filled:" v. 6.

Many followed Christ so eagerly, that, exhausted for want of food, they were in danger of fainting by the way. If our Lord now saw in the countenances of some the signs of that anguish which hunger creates, and of that earnest and intense pursuit of religion which made Job prefer the divine word to his necessary food; here was consolation for them. The pains of hunger and thirst are not so severe as those which they feel who long to be holy; and it is to this Christ refers; for he is describing the spirit of his own disciples, who have already obtained righteousness by faith; but who, having only the commencement of sanctification, are urged to go on to perfection with an eagerness which, like hunger, is a sign of health. Consciousness that they have not attained the fulness of the Divine image, "in knowledge, righteous-

^{*} Psalm xxxvii. 8, in which, as well as in the sermon of our Lord, we might read, "inherit the land," i. e. of Canaan; but considered as a type of a better.

ness, and true holiness, creates a painful sense of emptiness; while admiration of the beauty of holiness, exhibited in our Lord, and promised to all that believe on him, makes them long for it, as the hungry man for food; and thirst for it, as the panting "hart, for the water brooks."

To say that those who are hungry and thirsty are happy, is to utter another paradox. But happy they are; for they shall be filled. Assure him that is thirsting after riches, that he shall be filled with them, and he will even now feel happy in his way; make him that is hungry after learning, sure that he shall be as full of knowledge as he could wish, and will he not be happy in the certainty of future stores? But it is only when righteousness is the object and aim, that hunger and thirst bring assurance of being filled. " Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart; for he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him." If he has given us a craving after his image, we have in this a pledge, that "Jesus loved us and gave himself for us, to sanctify and cleanse us, and present us before the presence of his glory, without spot, or blemish, or any such thing." How happy they are who believe this assurance, no tongue can tell. For in proportion as their present sense of unlikeness to God, creates the gnawings of hunger, their expecta-tion of being one day filled with Christ's image, gives an antepast of heaven. David exclaims, "as for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." If God has made us long to be as holy as angels, he will at length make us as holy as we long to be. Then, from the summit of unspotted purity, we shall look down to the time when we first felt the pains of hunger after this state, and date from that day our bliss. From the moment any one longs for God's righteous image, you may pronounce him blessed. For though there may be dread of hell and desire of future happiness, where there is no religion; the love of holiness is the effect of grace, and as "the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever, he will not forsake the work of his own hands, but perfect that which concerneth us."

The fifth beatitude is that of the merciful. "Blessed are they for they shall receive mercy: v. 7.

Perhaps our Lord now saw what he afterwards described, a self-righteous Pharisee, consigning to condemnation some poor self-condemned publican, whom Incarnate Mercy took this opportunity of consoling, by showing how different is the spirit of the truly happy man. He, seeing the penitent sinner heave the sigh of conscious guilt, glories not over him, but says, "The Lord lay not his sins to his charge! grant him that mercy that I seek for myself!" The bitterness of pride, and the implacability of revenge, are as opposite to the Christian temper, as drunkenness, or theft, or the grosser vices, can be to the Christian conduct. When mercy marks us out for her triumphs, she sets up her throne in our breasts. on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." "Vengeance is mine," saith God, "therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him;" for he that attempts to right himself, wrongs God. But whoever feels the yearnings of the bowels of mercy, where others would have glutted their revenge, has even now the elements of happiness; for mercy is but a modification of love, and love is not only the essence of holiness, but of bliss. If our disposition to show mercy arises from feeling how much we need it, and how unfit it is for one who lives on the mercy of God to revenge himself on a fellow-sinner, this is an evidence that we shall "find mercy at that day that shall burn as an oven, when all the proud and hard-hearted shall be as stubble."

Happy the child and champion of mercy, if he knows his bliss. For what makes us miserable, but sin, with its attendant, guilt? What casts the dark shade over life, and, amidst its comforts and joys, sends back our blood cold to our hearts, but this appalling thought—What if, after all my present enjoyments, God should at last deal with me according

to my sins?" What, then, can make us so blessed, as the assurance that God will "be merciful to us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us?" How blissful the feeling of mercy towards the guilty, when we reflect that this is but the effect of grace? It is the finger of mercy touching our hearts of stone, and turning them to flesh; that, when we stand at God's awful bar, we shall not hear him say, "They shall have judgment without mercy who showed no mercy."

The sixth beatitude is that of "the pure in heart: they shall see God:" v. 8.

See that Jew, studious of ceremonial purity, offended with the touch of the promiscuous crowd, and exclaiming, with equal anger and pride, "What defilement have I contracted, in order to see this teacher! After this, what ablution will be necessary before I eat bread, or enter the synagogue!" Ah! happy thou, says our Lord; if thou wert pure in heart; for "out of it proceed the evil thoughts which defile the man." But they who make conscience of their thoughts, and cultivate purity of motive and affection, shall be admitted to see God in the assembly of "the spirits of the just made perfect, where nothing that defileth shall ever enter."

But God is a spirit, you say, whom no man can see, with the bodily eye, any more than it can see thoughts. True; but the pure in heart shall see "God manifest in the flesh," in the person of the Lamb in the midst of the throne of heaven; for "the Lamb is the light thereof." And they shall have a mental view of God, in what is called the beatific vision, far more satisfactory than any sight which eyes of flesh can enjoy. Even in the present world, the mind's eye shows its superiority over that of the body. Who that knows God, as he now shines in the face of Christ, does not pant to know him more, to tear the veil of concealment, "that we may know even as we are known." Well; the assurance of this

^{*} This is parallel to the phrase, poor in spirit, and shows, that in both, we must add the internal disposition to the external condition.

felicity may shed bliss over the present state of obscurity, while "we see through a glass darkly;" for he that cannot look upon iniquity will unveil himself to those whom he has taught to admire the beauty of holiness; and they who have blushed and sighed over the impurity they have seen without and felt within, shall see in God all that which shall satisfy their utmost longings after him. Who can look forward with confidence, and not feel that it makes us even now blessed, to be able to say, "I shall see God face to face?"

The seventh beatitude is this, "Happy are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God:" v. 9.

In a crowd, where all are eager to hear, disputes will arise, and our Lord may have seen some of his disciples kindly quieting the contentious, by "soft words, which turn away wrath," reminding them how indecent it was to quarrel in the presence of one so kind to them all. Happy, then, said the Saviour, are you that make peace and extinguish strife. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon you, that you should be called the sons of God!" For God has predestinated all who are his sons by regeneration, to be conformed to the image of his only begotten Son, who "came preaching peace," and quenching the flames of the fiercest war in his own blood. "If you are children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ."

Who that ever saw a Christian imitating his Lord by striving to compose differences, to reconcile enemies, and restore harmony and love, where strife and enmity had reigned, did not see in him the very image of his heavenly Father, and the unequivocal signs of a happy mind? And who can doubt that God will make his own children blessed? For, if we, who are evil, study the happiness of our offspring, how much more will the God of love and peace make them blessed whom he has begotten by his grace, after his own image, and owned before the world, by saying, "These are my sons and daughters!" If the children of poverty would feel themselves most happy were a rich man, or a king to own them as his children, what language can do justice to

their bliss who are called, by the voice of Heaven, the children of the living God?*

The eighth beatitude is that of the men who are persecuted and reviled for the Saviour's sake: v. 10, 11, 12.

As Christ's fame was now waking up the enmity of the Pharisees, they were probably marking out for their vengeance the poor, whom they called "cursed and ignorant of the law," and who were now beginning to tremble lest they should be deprived of the alms of the synagogue, and be crushed by the storm that was about to burst on the followers of the Lamb. But he bids them triumph under the banner of the Cross, in the assurance, that what they lost on earth, should be repaid in heaven. Let us only be sure, that the persecutions we endure are for our righteousness, and not for our sins; that the evil that is said against us is false, and is the result of enmity to the Saviour, whose image we bear, and whose cause we defend; then, instead of grieving, blushing, or trembling, we may indulge in high exultation and heavenly gladness; for we are not only suffering in a good cause, but in good company. Prophets and apostles, saints and martyrs, all that shine brightest in glory, and drink deepest of bliss, have ascended to their thrones by the same steps. But they "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance." Happy were Paul and Silas, when scourged and put into the dungeon, with their feet fast in the stocks; for they, at midnight, basked in the sunshine of heaven, and made the gaol echo with their songs of praise, till "the prisoners heard them." Nothing cheers the heart with pleasures so exquisite as the consciousness that we are suffering for religion and for God. To die in this cause is more blissful than to reign in any other. The Apostles, when

^{*} Here I cannot but feel myself called to commend to the patronage of the children of God, the Society for the Promotion of Universal Peace. The wars waged under the Christian name have blasted its fair fame, which will never be restored to the original purity and lustre, till "swords are beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, and men learn war no more."

beaten, "returned from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake." The greatest sufferer for righteousness, the man of sorrows, Jesus Christ, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Look at the glorious army of martyrs, with Jesus the king of martyrs at their head, and see whether they repent of what they have endured, when they not only lost their liberty in gaols, but their fair fame, by vilest calumnies, and finally, their lives, by martyrdom; and say, whether it was not with high propriety, that to those who are on the road to this bliss, joy was enjoined as a duty; so that, to them, happiness was holiness.

Our Lord now gives a turn to his discourse, in order to show

II. The honour of usefulness: from v. 13-16.

To all those who are blessed in the tempers here described, it is not enough that they are themselves happy, for they aspire to be useful, in making others blessed. Christ has graciously met the disposition which he himself has implanted, and which he so much approves, with an assurance that the honour of promoting the salvation of others shall crown the joy of their own. Under figures, he shows them, that they shall act as salt to save the world from corruption, and as light to rescue it from ignorance; both which were probably suggested to our Lord by the salt heaps mentioned by travellers in the East, and by the lights in the city of Capernaum on the opposite hill. Christians shall be,

1. As salt, to save the world from corruption.

The depravity of our fallen nature is fearfully proved, by the constant tendency of man to a moral dissolution, which is like that physical decay in animal matter which salt is designed to counteract and prevent. The sentence of our Creator was once pronounced thus, "all flesh has corrupted its way: I will destroy man whom I have made." But the terrible judgment of the Flood was so soon lost upon mankind, that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was necessary to give a second warning to the corrupt race. And, when the

rest of the world was given up, that one nation which was selected for God and religion, was not long preserved from the general depravity. Even the example and teaching of an incarnate God, and the force of his holy religion, did not prevent the tendency to corruption; but Christianity itself was transformed into what was diametrically its opposite.

For though Christians are the antagonist force which heaven's mercy has provided, to arrest the march of corruption, the salt is in danger of "losing its savour." Wisely and kindly, therefore, did our Lord warn his disciples, in order that they might guard against the event so fatal to the world. For, if other substances are exposed to corruption, salt is provided to preserve them. But, if salt could change, and lose its saline properties, what could restore them? There is nothing that can act as salt to salt, which, therefore, if rendered insipid, is hopeless and worthless, and must be thrown out, as mere dirt, to be trodden under foot.

Are you, then, chosen to the high honour of being separated and distinguished from the world, to resist its tendencies and correct its morals; what infatuation must have seized you, Christians, if you study to be like the world, when the very end of your distinction demands opposite qualities? It is the voice of God that says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds."

Is the flesh designed to give its properties to the salt, or the salt to the flesh? Your sentiments must therefore be, not those of the world, but those of God revealed in his word; your spirit must savour, not of earth, but of heaven; your conduct must be, not according to the laws of this world, but after the example of Christ; your conversation must be directed to arrest the current of ordinary talk; and your intercession must be addressed to heaven, that, by calling in almighty aids, you may do what you otherwise could not hope to effect. For, if you take an opposite course, you not only fall from your high vocation to save a world from ruin, but you curse that world with the insipidity on which it will trample, where you should have blessed it with a savour of life, to rescue it from moral and eternal death. For what

has hitherto preserved this earth from that universal profligacy which would have made it the antechamber of hell, but the pungency of Christian sentiment, the savour of heaven in the conversion of believers, the force of example exhibited by holy men, and the evangelical spirit of Christian worship? To this salt we owe all reformation of manners and religion, and all return to soundness of morals and prevalence of piety. But, if this salt become insipid, what shall restore it to its proper virtue and active force? The world will not recover the Church, and therefore the Church must restore the world, or be dispersed and trampled upon as one pretending to a distinction where there is no difference, and degraded, like Lucifer, to the apostacy and perversion of an archangel fallen. Salt of the earth, beware of losing your savour; maintain your difference; counteract your opponents; exert your principles; prize your high calling: for, in doing this, you shall save yourselves and the world around you. But Christians are exhibited by their Lord,

2. As light to rescue the world from the darkness of ignorance.

For, when you are said to be lights, it is supposed that those around you are in darkness; as the sun is the light of our system, because this earth and the other planets, and their moons, are dark bodies. "Darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people;" and "you shine," says the Apostle, "among them, as lights in a dark place." All nations were left to walk in their own way, that it might be demonstrated that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Men boast of the native light of reason; but what did it teach Athens, the eye of Greece, itself the eye of the world? It left her to manufacture a rabble of deities; so that it was said, you may more easily find a god there than a man; and, after all, to erect an altar "to the unknown God." What has it taught China, the most enlightened of heathen empires? Nothing concerning God, or the way to holiness, happiness and heaven. What has Christianity herself done, without the light of living Christians? Scarcely afforded even grey twilight.

But when the surrounding country was in Egyptian darkness, it was said of Israel, "they had light in all their dwellings." And to you it is given to know the kingdom of God, while, to others, all is parable. You know yourselves, for he that searches the heart and tries the reins has given a portion of that knowledge to you; so that, like the glow-worm, that has a luminous phosphoric drop within itself, while all other creatures are merely opaque; you have that acquaintance with the depravity, and guilt, and helplessness of man, that renders you awake to the general necessities and dangers of our race. From heaven descended the maxim, "Man, know thyself," and from the highest heavens descended the knowledge of God, for he "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has given you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

This was not intended for yourselves merely, but for others. You are placed as lights in the world. You are, therefore to be conspicuous, and not only luminous, but illuminating, as a city, like Capernaum set on a hill, that cannot be hidden. This was then in the view of our Lord; and of this city he said, "Thou, Capernaum, art exalted to heaven." Are we not lighted and set up for this purpose, that we may be seen, and givelight to others; as we light a lamp, not to put it under a cover like a corn measure, but in a lamp-stand, that all in the house may see? We are charged, therefore, to "let our light shine abroad." If our modesty would make us silent, our mercy must make us speak; if our humility would induce us to retire, our zeal should push us forward; if we fear to act, lest we should do wrong, we should still more dread to forbear, lest we should do nothing. For light must diffuse itself, and dart its rays abroad, and the darkness of the world requires that we carry the blazing torch into its recesses, lest men should rise in judgment against us, and say to us at last, "You knew our dangers and did not tell us; you had found the way to heaven, and never apprized us, whom you saw rushing down to perdition." We do not say, for Christ does not, "Let men hear of your good works from you:" no, let them be seen rather; for you may "do

good by stealth, but you will "blush to find it fame." For, if you labour to enlighten the world, the effects will proclaim it, and men will see, and bless the sight, and "glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Then, what will be your triumph! You will have attained the end of your being, which is the glory of God; you will have saved a soul from death. For he who glorifies your Father becomes, with you, a child of his grace. You will exult in having seized the two greatest prizes in the universe, by having brought out a wandering soul from darkness into marvellous light, and promoted the glory of the First of Beings, who is well pleased to be known, for which end he created all things, and who will smile on the light which has reflected back its rays on its glorious author.

Strange as it may seem, I yet ask, can any subject more need application than this which we have now considered? I know that nothing is more common than to praise our Lord's excellent sermon on the mount; but then men turn away, satisfied to have praised, and gravely argue that it is too sublime to be practised. If I make any thing like a faithful application, I must divide my audience into three classes:—those who openly seek a happiness contrary to that which is here displayed—those who attempt a compromise between this and what is opposite—and those who seek their happiness in the way our Lord prescribes.

Many who profess to admire, as dutiful Christians, this divine discourse, yet glory in the character of high spirited men, endued with a noble pride and a just sense of their own importance, having good hearts, which never give way to grief, but esteem life as made for laughter and jokes. They know how to resent an injury, and make every one behave to them as he ought. Far from hungering and thirsting after righteousness, they are quite full of their own goodness, and, instead of suffering persecution for religion, they take care to have no more than is consistent with their credit among those who are in power.

Ah! surely such persons have reason to exclaim, as one of old did, "Blessed Jesus, either this is not the true Gospel,

or we are not true Christians." Though I would abhor to give such men one pang of unnecessary pain, I would endure any thing to terrify them out of their assumption of the name of Christians. I know how this would diminish the ranks of the supposed disciples of Christ; but, then, he would lose nothing, and they might gain much, by taking their proper place. For thus they might open their eyes to the fact, that theirs is a character made up of the opposites to that which Christ pronounced blessed. And does not conscience testify, that, when your bosom has swollen with pride and wrath, you have looked with secret envy at those who have shown "the meekness and gentleness of Christ?" Can you look at the Son of God, and not see that his character contained the true elements of bliss? And how can you hope to share that felicity on earth, or in heaven, unless you possess that character? Why plead your natural temper as an apology for all that is contrary to Christ and to bliss? Has not our Redeemer come to create a moral revolution in our nature? Does he not "sit on the throne, saying, Behold I create all things new?" Believe on his name and you shall find, that "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new."

But, in this assembly, the second is likely to be the larger class—those who attempt a compromise between the elements of the bliss which Christ describes, and tempers of an opposite character. These would not go all lengths with the proud, the passionate, and the profanely merry; for they know that meekness, and lowliness, and gentleness, and penitence, are essential to the Christian character. But though you do not, with "fools, make a mock at sin," you are far from mourning over it; if you would not draw a sword to avenge yourselves, you, without scruple, take other methods to make an enemy feel your resentments; if you do not despise the strictness of religion, you do not "hunger and thirst after" its highest attainments; if you suffer any reproaches, or other inconveniences, for the little religion you have, you are so far from rejoicing at it, that it sits un-

easily on you. Instead of going thoroughly into the spirit of the beatitudes, you seek to supply your lack of bliss by a large admixture of other and opposite ingredients. But what is the consequence? You know not how happy are those whom Christ describes. If a physician prescribes a certain remedy, and you, afraid of its operation, should mingle it with opposite substances, could you expect to experience the effect which he intended to produce? If a friend, finding you in a wrong direction, should inform you that you must turn back, and go in an opposite course, and you, trusting to your own reasonings, should take a middle way between the two, would you not, in proportion as he was right, find that you had gone wrong, and had wandered out of the way? We do not profess to doubt the infallible judgment of Christ concerning true bliss. Then what can we gain by our middle course, but so much deviation from happiness? And are we not aware that we actually miss the mark of true felicity, in exact proportion to our departure from the very spirit of Christ's directions, so that we cannot enjoy earth for heaven's sake, nor heaven for earth's sake? You are too well aware of the nature of happiness to expect it in the way of the world, and too little aware of it to seek bliss in the only way of God. "How long halt ve between two opinions?" What can be more wretched and disgraceful than this perpetual vacillation? Oh, quit the large class to which you now belong, and turn to

The third and last class, which consists of those who enter thoroughly into the Saviour's sentiments on the characteristics of genuine bliss. You know, Christians, that in proportion as you walk in all lowliness and meekness, and share with the man of sorrows in his endurance of opposition from the world, you share with him in his bliss. For the happy temper is the same every where, in heaven, or in earth; every Christian knows that the blessed above are of a disposition totally opposite to that in which men of the world seek enjoyment. Wisely, then, did an ancient saint lay down this as a rule for self examination, "Try myself by the beatitudes." "Go thou," says our Lord, "and do likewise."

LECTURE V.

THE SECOND ON CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATT. v. 17-48.

THE TRUE INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW.

As no accuracy or felicity of description can give an adequate idea of a person we never saw, but, after all our fancied knowledge of him, the first glance of the eye convinces us that we had been utterly mistaken; so it is, perhaps, equally impossible to convey, by words, any just, or at least perfect, conception of future events. The various and dissimilar notions that have been formed of that approaching season, that is called the Millennium, prove that *some* must have misunderstood the prophetic word. When it arrives, we shall, perhaps, find that we were all greatly mistaken. Is it surprising, then, that before the Messiah came, the Jews should have formed many erroneous expectations, and should have cherished pernicious hopes of the design of his advent?

Had they expected that he would abolish the ceremonial law, they would have been justified by many declarations of the Prophets, by the consideration that the Levitical ritual was adapted to a single nation, inhabiting a country so small as Palestine, and by many signs which indicated that these carnal ordinances were "waxing old, and were ready to vanish away." But this, unhappily, does not seem to have entered their minds, as they made it a grave charge against the first disciples of Christ, that they affirmed that their Master "would change the customs which Moses delivered to them, and destroy the holy place." Thus, "Their table became a snare, and that which should have been for their welfare became a trap."

But our Lord here intimates that some thought, or at best

were in danger of thinking, he came to destroy the *moral* law. Against this notion he solemnly warns us. For the commandments given on Mount Sinai, and deposited in the ark, the centre of the holy place, were engraven on tablets of stone, and would live, though all the rest of the Levitical apparatus were consumed to ashes.

The moral law was the expression of the Divine Mind con-

cerning our relation to God and our fellow-creatures.

He that gave us our moral nature, by this fitted us for moral government; and when he presented his own excellence to our understanding and our conscience, he could do no other than demand all the powers he had given us, for he is the being who deserves them all. And what other law could be prescribed for our duty to our fellow-creatures, than to command us to love them as ourselves? This was a rule so manifestly equitable, so constantly at hand, so adapted to promote our happiness, and the honour of the common Father of us all, that it is difficult to conceive of any other measure of duty. As, therefore, the law was not arbitrary, but founded on the nature and reason of things, it was immutable. The law being thus holy, just, and good, heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one iota or tittle of it shall be abolished.

To diminish, therefore, in the least degree, the authority and force of the law, by our teaching or by our example, is to sink ourselves to the lowest rank of those who belong to that celestial reign, which Messiah came to establish; but to enforce the law, by our instructions and our actions, is to rise to the loftiest eminence in that empire which maintains the rights of God, and the true interests of man.

Let none say that this is to symbolize with the Pharisees, who sought righteousness by works of law. We shall soon see that if we maintain the true honour of the law, we must feel compelled to seek a far nobler righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. No other than that of Christ can meet the demands of the law, as it is here expounded. After this general introduction, our Saviour proceeds to enter into an explanation, not of all the Ten Commandments,

but of several of the most prominent, which serve as specimens by which we may interpret the rest.

I. The law concerning murder he explains from v. 21 to 26. Our translators have not conveyed the true meaning of the Redeemer, when they say, "Ye have heard that it has been said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill." It is not intended to represent the ancients as speaking thus, but to show that the modern Rabbis had misrepresented what God said to them of old time, i. e. to the ancestors of Israel, who heard the law delivered on Mount Sinai. Nor does our Saviour exhibit himself as altering the law, to make it more strict, which would be destroying* it, to give a new one; but he merely confutes the false glosses of the modern Jewish lawyers, or divines, and restores the law to its pristine purity and vigour. His words may be paraphrased thus: "You have been told that God commanded your forefathers, merely to abstain from the actual commission of murder; but I say to you that the law is spiritual, and extends to the tempers of the heart, forbidding all anger and bitter passions, and all contemptuous, provoking speeches, such as raca, empty fellow, or fool." + For as love is the fulfilling of the law, every thing contrary to benevolence is a transgression; and murder is but the consummation of the malice which the law condemns. Cain, the murderer, is therefore, branded by the Apostle as being "of the wicked one," because he hated his brother. For if a person kill another without malice prepense, as our law expresses it, neither God nor man condemns it as murder. If then the essence of this crime lies in the malice, the God who sees the heart, charges the guilt on him who has the disposition, though want of opportunity, or

^{*} The original word here employed is seen, by the usage of the Greek writers, to mean an authoritative alteration.

[†] Here we see how we are to reconcile this prohibition of saying "Thou fool," with the conduct of Paul, in saying (1 Cor. xv.), "Thou fool." To say this, to provoke another to anger, is virtual murder; the Apostle spake in a benevolent spirit, having no individual in view, but wishing to show the folly of a supposed objection to the doctrine of the resurrection.

dread of punishment, may restrain from the last act, the shedding of our brother's blood. For is not God the sovereign of the heart? Is it not the special prerogative of him who searches the heart and tries the reins, to judge the secrets of all hearts? What but the indulgence of malicious tempers and provoking speeches has led to all the murders that have ever stained the earth with human blood?

To press this just interpretation of the law on the hearts of his professed disciples, our Redeemer charges them to reflect that God regards their tempers towards each other, in all their approaches to him. Alluding to the ancient offerings, he says, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother has some cause of complaint against thee, proceed not a step farther in the worship of God till thou hast settled thy difference with thy fellowman. Nor let the pride of thy heart indulge in sullen delays, but leave the gift at the altar, as intending to come back immediately to offer it. As thou wouldest, if on the way to court, settle thy dispute with one at law with thee, in order to escape the consequence of being cast in thy suit, so remember that thou art also on thy way to God's tribunal, and shouldest, therefore, instantly lay aside all this malice which exposes thee to his condemnation, and cultivate all that benevolence which his law enjoins. For if thou canst not escape from the imprisonment inflicted by human justice, till complete satisfaction be made, how canst thou hope to find deliverance from future punishment, when fallen under the justice of heaven?"

Can we hear this interpretation of the law of murder, so wise, so just, so holy, so benevolent, and yet so authoritative, without exclaiming, "Who can tell his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." "I have seen an end of all perfection, thy commandment is exceeding broad." Can we hear Christ's exposition of the law, without remembering that it is the design of the New Covenant to confer this prime blessing upon us, the writing of the law in our hearts; "that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit"? "He that hateth his

brother abideth in death;" for he is a murderer, and "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." "What man, therefore, is there that loves life, and desires many days, that he may see good? Let him keep his tongue from evil," and beware of committing murder with his lips. And, above all, guard his heart, that the malice of the murderer have no entrance there. Let not any one imagine that he can bribe heaven by his gifts, to tolerate his evil temper toward his brother; for Jehovah says, "When ye stretch out your hands, I will not see you; for your hands are full of blood."

II. The law of adultery is next vindicated from the per-

versions of the Jewish school: v. 27-32.

"You have heard that God said, Thou shalt not commit adultery." In this command is included our duty with regard to the intercourse of the two sexes, for in the beginning God made them male and female. The Pharisees, who boasted so much of their own righteousness, confined this precept to the grosser acts by which the violation of chastity is committed, or to what our law calls criminal conversation. But the great expositor and fulfiller of the law shows that God designed to forbid every thing unchaste, even a look expressive of an adulterous wish, which is condemned as adultery in heart. The sexes were created for each other's society and solace in a state of innocence, and were made fellow-heirs of the grace of immortal life, that they might promote each other's devotion here, and happiness hereafter. Every thing contrary to this is the unchastity which the legislator designed to prevent; and unless the law thus rule our heart, what, but want of opportunity, or dread of punishment, prevents the actual commission of adultery, fornication and all uncleanness? If God is not to judge us adulterers, but when we commit that crime, of which human tribunals take cognizance, wherein is his dominion superior to that of man?

Has he not, in other parts of his word, asserted the same claim to the jurisdiction of the heart? Has he not said of some, "they have eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin?" Did not Job say, "I have made a covenant with

my eyes, that I should not look on a maid!" Was it not the neglect of this rule that plunged David, not merely into actual adultery, but into murder too? For lasciviousness and blood go hand in hand, as the murder of the greatest of the ancient Prophets, John, committed, at the instigation of an adulteress, can testify.

Since, then, the eye affects the heart; by this inlet, if not carefully guarded, the foul crimes of murder and adultery enter and seize the citadel of the soul. If, therefore, thine eye offend thee, i. e. cause thee to stumble in the path of holiness, pluck it out and cast it from thee as an abhorred thing; or if thy hand offend, cut it off and cast it from thee. These bold orientalisms, though foreign from the coldness of our northern speech, are adapted to our common nature, and admirably calculated to startle us, and impress on the memory and heart lessons, which, if delivered in more didactic phrase, would slide off from the mind, as the wave from the feathers of the sea-fowl. Act, then, with as much decision, and be as severe upon thyself as he who should pluck out his own eye, and fling it away with abhorrence; or should with the one hand cut off the other, and cast it on the ground. Tear thyself away from an object that, by exposing thee to temptation, would defile thy heart and betray thec into sin. At any cost, escape from the commission of sin. For no severity can be unreasonable where eternity is at stake. If thou dally with the temptation, thou art a ruined man. It is better to enter into life under any disadvantage, though thou wert to live there as a one-eyed or a one-handed man, than by shrinking from these sacrifices, to give both thine eyes and both thy hands, and thy whole body and soul to torment. Heaven shall richly repay the sacrifices of virtue, and hell severely avenge the pleasures of sin; for eternity sets upon the pains or pleasures of futurity, the stamp of infinity.*

^{*} It is worthy of notice that even the wiser heathens condemn the Jews and justify our Lord. Arrian, in his Dissertation on Epictetus, says, $\delta \epsilon \hat{\iota} - \sigma o l \kappa \alpha \lambda \dot{\eta} \nu \gamma \nu \nu \alpha \hat{\iota} \kappa \alpha \phi a l \nu \epsilon \sigma \theta a \iota \mu \eta \delta \epsilon \mu \dot{\iota} \alpha \nu \dot{\eta} \tau \dot{\eta} \nu \sigma \dot{\eta} \nu$: no woman should appear beautiful to you but your own wife.

This opportunity our Lord seizes, to reprove the Jewish perversion of another law; for, because God commanded that divorce should not be made in a hasty fit, but should be confirmed by a legal writing, called a bill of divorce, therefore they thought, they might, with this formality, divorce their wives whenever they pleased. But Jesus says, that whosoever shall divorce his wife, except for fornication, or violation of the marriage bed, which, ipso facto, dissolves the bond, exposes her to the commission of adultery; and whoever marries one put away for adultery, which brands her as unworthy to become a wife, does but commit adultery under the form of marriage. And did not the ancient Prophets teach the same? Malachi reproaches the Jews for their divorces, as springing from a lewd adulterous heart. Did not he that made us, at the first, make us male and female, that, for this purpose, a man might forsake his father and mother that he might cleave unto his wife? "what, therefore, God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

III. The law of oaths is expounded, from v. 33 to 37.

Our Redeemer, having given their true meaning to the sixth commandment, "thou shalt not kill," and the seventh, "thou shalt not commit adultery," now rectifies the false notion of the Jews concerning the third, "thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." They seem to have supposed, that, provided they abstained from the use of the sacred name, and performed what they swore to, they might confirm their assertions by any oaths they pleased to employ. But Christ shows that such interlarding common conversation, with what may be called minor oaths, was but a profane way of appealing to God. Swear not, then, by heaven, for it is God's throne;* nor by earth, for it is his footstool; nor by looking towards Jerusalem,+ for it is the city of the

^{*} Herodotus says, the Scythians were accustomed to swear by the royal seat as their most solemn oath; and when the king fell sick, his seers informed him that it was because some one had falsely taken that oath.

[†] The expression here is altered, and instead of ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ; the Evangelist says, εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, which strictly signifies, towards Jerusa-

great king, who especially lives and reigns there, by being worshipped there; nor by thy head, for God is its creator, and thou canst not make one hair white or black; but let "thy assertion be simply yes, and thy denial merely no." For if you go beyond this, you are instigated by the evil one, who prompts you, by pride and rashness, to a guilty approach to the more gross violation of the third commandment.

What then shall we think of those Christians, who, utterly slighting their Lord's prohibition, make a practice of going beyond yes and no, by adding, if not "upon my life," or "upon my soul," upon my word, or upon my honour? Does not this come so fearfully near to profane swearing, as to be unbecoming a Christian's lips? Can it proceed from anything but evil? Does it not indicate a carelessness concerning the law of Christ, and imply a suspicion that our simple assertion, or denial, is not enough?

It will be seen, that I do not consider this passage as affecting the question of judicial oaths, employed by the magistrate to bind witnesses more solemnly to the truth. My reasons are these: there is no mention here of the formula used in the Jewish courts, which was a solemn appeal to God; and none of those oaths which Christ mentions were ever used in their forms of law. Whether judicial oaths are lawful under the Christian dispensation is another question, not decided by this passage, which merely forbids the profaneness and levity by which the common conversation of the Jews was interlarded with what they deemed minor oaths. The wiser moralists among the heathen gave this advice, "Decline swearing altogether, if you can; but if not, then as much as possible."* But the fearful extent to which judicial, and especially what are called official oaths, are employed in this country is a grievous offence to him who charged us not "to take the name of the Lord our God in vain." "Because of swearing our land mourneth;"

lem, referring, probably, to a custom of turning towards Jerusalem, to swear, as the Jews did to pray.

^{*} Epictetus: "Ορκον παραίτησαι, εἰ μὲν οἶόν τε εἰς ἄπαν, εἰ δὲ μὴ ἐκ τῶν ἐνόντων.

for custom-house oaths are a bye-word, and a hissing. Commercial men are commanded to take oaths concerning things of which they cannot possibly tell whether they are true or false. It is as gratifying, on the one hand, to know that our government has recently diminished these oaths by hundreds, as it is afflictive on the other, to reflect, that they may still be diminished by thousands, without detracting, in the least, from the security which civil government demands.

It is, indeed, difficult to see the necessity, or the use of oaths. Christians need them not, being bound by religion to be as careful of truth in bearing witness, without an oath as with one; and daily experience shows that profane men are not bound by any oaths; so that their use is confined to men of medium character, who might, as well as others, be allowed to bear testimony in a prescribed form of solemn affirmation, liable to all the penalties due to false swearing.*

IV. The law of retaliation or revenge, is unfolded from v. 38-42.

You have been told that God said to your ancestors, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" and this has been supposed to authorise the retaliation of private injuries, within the limits of what is familiarly called giving a man as good as he brought. God did, indeed, command the magistrate to adopt this rule in judgment, as we read in the law, and Christ intends not to contradict or alter, much less to condemn or censure the law of God. But to apply this to private individuals, was contrary to the design of God, who had laid down another law for them, saying, "If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under its burden, thou shalt surely help him." David appeals to God, saying, "I delivered him who without cause was my adversary." Psa. vii. 4.

^{*} Exemption from the obligation of taking an oath in courts of law, formerly granted only to the Society of Friends, is now extended to the people called Separatists. But this improvement in our law should be rendered complete, by granting to every one who conscientiously objects to taking an oath, the right to give his testimony by mere affirmation.

[†] Ex. xxi. 24; Lev. xxiv. 20.

[†] Ex. xxiii. 5.

Our Lord, therefore, thus proceeds: "I say unto thee, resist not evil," or rather rise not up against the evil man, by way of resistance or retaliation; but if a person smite thee on one cheek, rather suffer him to smite thee on the other also, than give blow for blow. That our Saviour does not mean to teach us, literally, to turn the other cheek, we learn from his own example, who, when smitten at the bar, did not turn the other cheek, but meekly said, " If I have done evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" The actual turning of the other cheek, would be considered a provoking invitation to repeat the offence, and would, in most instances, produce that effect; but this strong way of expressing the Saviour's meaning-to be ready to take a second injury, rather than avenge the firsthas been of great use, by rousing attention to the Christian law of bearing injuries without retaliation.

In the same spirit, we are charged to avoid going to law on frivolous occasions, but rather to suffer a further injury; so that if a man would, by an unjust suit, take away our coat, we should even allow him to take away our cloak also. In the second illustration of this maxim, there is something that needs explaining; for when Christ says, "He that would compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him two," he alludes to a custom that does not obtain among us. The eastern posts were conducted on the principle of our impressments, or the French requisition, the letters or the orders from government being carried by a messenger, with authority to compel others to assist him in conveying it from stage to stage.* Rather than resist this requisition to go a mile, exceed it and go two. This is not merely a prudential maxim, by which Christians would be great gainers, as those who love litigation are sure to be losers; but it prescribes a solemn religious duty, that of avoiding strife, and even shunning the very appearance of a litigious spirit,

^{*} Herodotus informs us that the Persians divided these journeys into days, to which men and horses were allotted, and no weather or roads could excuse any one from completing his task within the given time. lib. 8.

which is hostile to our own peace of mind, and injurious to the credit of our holy religion. In like manner we are commanded to "Give to him that asketh, and from him that would borrow of us, not to turn away." For we are bound by the grace shown to us, to live under the influence of the precept, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, " It is more blessed to give than to receive." And "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." To lend, too, is often a sacred duty, for though "the wicked borroweth, and payeth not again," and we are not bound to encourage a man in sin, or to do that which would injure our own families, without benefiting a careless borrower; it is the mark of a good man that he lendeth. This service to an honest and industrious, but needy man, is a duty, as long as we keep within the limits of lending that which we could afford to lose, if we should never be paid. We shall not lose our reward in heaven; but may there enjoy the satisfaction of seeing our loans prove greater benefits than gifts; and whatever may be the consequence to our brother, we shall enjoy the approbation of our heavenly Father.

V. The law of love is the name which we must give to the close of this exposition; it extends from v. 43 to the end of the chapter.

You have heard that it was said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour." The Jews considered this to mean their friends, thinking themselves at liberty to hate their enemies. We have seen that this is in direct contradiction to the provision of their own law,* which forbad them to "rejoice when their enemy fell into evil; lest the Lord should see it and be angry." Our Saviour, therefore, expressly commands us to love our enemies; and in order to enforce this, he delivered the parable of the good Samaritan, who showed the greatest kindness to a Jew, who was an enemy to his nation. By this beautiful and touching method, Christ

^{*} Prov. xxiv. 17.

taught that the term "neighbour," means every one with whom we come into contact, as both the Greek word which the evangelist employs, and the Hebrew, to which it corresponds, signifies one near to us.* Thus we learn, that even our bitterest enemy, if thrown in our way, and placed in circumstances in which we have an opportunity of showing our disposition toward him, is entitled to our love. There is no creature on earth to whom we are allowed to show, or to feel hatred. There are none to whom we are not bound to prove that we love their persons, however we may hate their characters, or actions. Such is the law of the sovereign of the heart.

Nor is this all that our master and Lord enjoins; for he charges us to cherish positive affection for those who may be our enemies, so as to bless those who actually curse us, to do good offices to those who revile us, and to offer up our prayers for those that lay snares for us and persecute us. Many will profess to love their enemies, who are far from returning blessing for cursing, kind services for hatred, and intercessions for persecutions. But it is the will of God that we, by such actions, prove the reality of our kind affections. And, without these proofs, may we not suspect that we love our enemies in word only, and not "in deed and in truth?" Is it not necessary, by positive proofs, to cherish our own love, which, when in danger of being quenched by men's enmity, is revived and inflamed by our own kind returns, and especially by those prayers for them, which are so pleasing to God, that he invariably grants us to experience their happy influence in overcoming provocation, and filling us with benevolent compassion? To the enemies themselves, how can we prove that we love them, but by such conduct as achieves the most glorious victory over them, and verifies the promise, "If thine enemy

^{*} Raphelius quotes Kimchi on Psa. xv. 3, as defending this interpretation against the Jews: "The Scriptures, by 'our neighbour,' mean him with whom we have intercourse."

hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for, by so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head? Be not, therefore, overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good."

Does any one exclaim, "How is it possible to love an enemy, or what propriety would there be in thus requiting hatred, and spite, and cursing? Would it not be giving a premium for wickedness, and tempting men to treat us ill, in hope of the reward we should give?" Whatever semblance of reason and justice there may be in this, it is the voice neither of reason, nor of religion. The child of God would rather say, " Does not my father act thus? Did he not thus treat me? When I was an enemy, was I not reconciled to him by the death of his Son? Did not that Son of God, my sovereign, and my pattern, set me the example, by healing the man that came to seize him, and praying for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do?' Do I not, every day, see the sun shine cheerfully on the heads of the wicked, and the gentle showers descend on the fields and gardens of those who blaspheme the God of providence? And how can I prove myself the child of such a Father, if I bear not his image. catch not his spirit, imitate not his ways?"

If we consent to those who ridicule such principles as extravagant, the very Quixotism of virtue, which, by being unreasonable, becomes impossible; do we not reduce ourselves to the class of those, who rise no higher than our depraved nature, and are mere sinners, as the Jews counted the publicans? Shall I wear the sacred name of Christian, and aspire to no higher morality than that of the heathen?* Are heathens to be my patterns? Have I not the exalted model of perfect holiness, given me in my heavenly Father, and am I not bound to aspire to perfect conformity to him? For, what though I may say, with the Apostle, "I count not myself to have apprehended;" should I not say, with him, "I follow after, reaching to the mark and prize of my high calling of God in Christ Jesus?" Is not perfection enjoined

^{*} For the common reading, publicans, Griesbach gives ἐθνικοὶ, heathens.

on me, as a duty? and should I not humble myself for every failure of obedience to the voice that says, "Be ye, therefore, perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect?"

Are we not surrounded with a cloud of witnesses, to prove that this is, if beyond the reach of nature, not above the mark to which the grace of Christ can raise us? Do we not blush then, when we see the angelic countenance of Stephen, while his enemies gnash on him with their teeth? And drop our objections, when we hear his dying voice plead for those who are dashing out his life. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge?" Was not Paul hunted like a wild beast, by his countrymen, the Jews, and does he not say, "I have continual heaviness and sorrow in my heart for them; for I bear them record that they have a mighty zeal, but not according to knowledge?" Did he not say, when driven to Rome by their malice, "Not that I have ought to accuse my nation of?" Thanks be to God, the world has never been without proofs that what some say is impossible to humanity, is not impossible to God, and that we may "Do all things through Christ strengthening us." Nor are there any records of history so sublime and refreshing and profitable, as those which we have concerning the unquenchable love that Christians have shown to their enemies, their kind returns for cruel treatment, and their fervent prayers for bitter persecutors. These are the proofs that the Christian religion is divine. May we give such evidences that this religion is ours!

May I not, now, repeat the words of an apostle: "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" In most cases, such as desire to be under the law for justification, do not hear the law; but that which is neither law nor Gospel. For, if they who preach not "Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," did but faithfully expound the law, after Christ's example, they would serve as schoolmasters, though severe ones, if not to lead, at least to drive men "to Christ, that they might be justified by faith." But to foster a false and ruinous confidence in their own righteousness, by works of law, men presumptuously fritter away the eternal law of God; that it

may suit the purposes of fallen man. Such interpretations as Christ here condemns in the Jews, are frequently given by those who call themselves Christian ministers.

But can any of these attempts to dilute the law, stand before the censures of him who came from the bosom of the Father to "magnify the law and make it honourable?" Is not his authoritative voice re-echoed by that of reason and conscience? Has not God a rightful dominion over the heart? Is it not an insult to his authority to limit it, like human law, to external acts? Are we not guilty of an attempt to mock him; if we present to him, as our claim for righteousness, in his sight, an obedience which he must know to be essentially defective?

The voice from Tabor expounds that from Sinai, and assures us that we may be guilty of murder, without taking away human life; that we may be adulterers, without criminal conversation; and that, in every commandment of the law, there is a spirituality which demands the obedience of the heart. But, if Christ has given us the law, the whole law, and nothing but the law; then, is there not a chorus of condemnation poured upon us from the thunders of Sinai, from the blessed voice of Jesus, from the stern accents of reason, and from the small shrill monitor, conscience? Did not a whole assembly of grave accusers retire, abashed, when Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, may cast the first stone at the adultress?"

What infatuation, then, must have seized us, if we dare to put ourselves on our trial, and risk our salvation, on the ground of our obedience to a law, which has been authoritatively expounded, by Jesus Christ? For if we are conscious that it cannot justify us for much that we have done, must it not condemn us? Is there any medium between being righteous and unrighteous; between justification for complete conformity to law, and condemnation for failure? Are we not assured, that "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them?"

With what gratitude, then, should we embrace the testimony of the Gospel, that "Christ is the end of the law for

righteousness to every one that believeth." Since the flaming glories of the law are such as we have seen, such as compel us to hide our guilty heads; we should welcome another way of righteousness, as a retreat for a wounded spirit, a refuge for the lost. He who has so exalted the law by his own interpretation of its claims, as to make every rational man shudder at his own obedience, or rather his own disobedience, has also reached all its loftiest demands; so that by his one obedience, "many may be made righteous." Thus has he "brought in everlasting righteousness." In the Lord being justified, we may glory; and challenge every accuser, saying, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, ever living to make intercession for us."

But what should be the character of those who profess to be justified by faith in Christ? They are received into a covenant of peace; and this is its grand promise; "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." The righteousness of Christ by which we are justified, gives the law its most exalted honours; and it is most appropriately followed by a process of sanctification as honourable to the Divine law, putting to shame the vulgar objection, that we "Make void the law by faith." As if we were authorised to violate the law, because we are not justified by it. To have it thus explained by Christ, commended to the mind by the Spirit of truth, and engraven on the heart by the Spirit of holiness, is to be called to high and holy things. Now that the law no longer "worketh wrath," we can love it. The Pharisee that seeks justification by works of law is satisfied, if he commit no murder with his hands, the justified believer is not only anxious to commit none with his heart, but is not satisfied unless he can labour for the salvation of those who would seek his destruction. The Saviour who is our righteousness is also our model, and blessed are they who bear his image.

LECTURE VI.

THIRD ON CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATT. vi. 1-16.

ON RELIGIOUS SINCERITY.

Having heard our infallible Prophet explode the false interpretation which the Jewish doctors of the Pharasaic school put upon the law, we are now to behold him exposing their corrupt practices, which were the natural consequence of their perversion of God's most holy rule. Hypocrisy and covetousness, the two ventricles of an unsound heart, are here seen sending their bad blood through all the system of that religion, which prompted the enemies of Christ to pursue him unto death. For as he advances in his discourse we are reminded of the energetic description of him by an Apostle, as "the living and powerful word, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Our Saviour teaches,

I. The necessity of a sincere heart.

Alms, or what we give to others; prayers, or the worship we offer to God; and fasting, or the mortification we impose on ourselves, have been called the three foundations of the law, for we should honour God with our souls, our bodies, and our outward estate. Our Lord commences with

1. Almsgiving, or honouring God with our substance, by making use of our outward estate for the relief of the poor.

This is, in the best Greek manuscripts, expressed by a word which usually signifies righteousness;* for so the Jews called alms-giving, and their hospital, near London, bears the

* The French of Maitre de Sacy, and the Italian of Martini, render it good works.

inscription, "House of Righteousness," meaning, it is to be feared, that giving to the poor was the righteousness to which they trusted for acceptance with God. That Christ intended alms is plain, from the third verse, where all manuscripts agree in retaining the proper word for charitable gifts. It is taken for granted, that this is a Christian duty, and what pious person can bear to spend all upon himself, if God has enabled him to taste the luxury of doing good? A converted thief is charged by the Apostle, to "labour, working with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth." "For none of us liveth to himself."

But our Lord's charge, not to give alms in order to be seen of men, does not prohibit, or discourage, subscriptions and collections, in which, joining with others, our charities are liable to be seen and known. For, if this publicity is not our aim, but arises from the necessity of the case, it does not vitiate the charity. The "collections for the poor saints at Jerusalem were publicly made by the Apostles, and warmly commended to the Gentile churches; while the offerings made by the Philippians for Paul's support, drew forth this most beautiful testimony of divine approbation; "Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen." In all such cases as make our alms known, we should, however, watch over our motives with jealous care, and cultivate all the modesty here enjoined.

But, if we sincerely regard the approbation of God rather than the applause of men, we shall not suffer our charities to

be confined to subscription lists and collection plates; nor shall we, in our private personal offerings, prefer the obtrusive, clamorous beggar, whose voice may be heard in the streets, either soliciting, or acknowledging our alms; but we shall seek out the deserving poor, who are pining in secret, in garrets, or in cellars, and whose voice no one will hear proclaiming our praise. Christians must not be like the ostentatious Pharisees, whom our Lord denounces, for sounding a trumpet before them. This has been said to allude to the form of the receptacle for charity, placed in the synagogues and temple, which, being shaped like a trumpet, and formed of metal, was made to sound, by rattling the money put in, in order that men might look and admire the piety of the donor. Others, however, say that it was the custom of the richer Pharisees to give notice, by the crier, with the sound of trumpet, that alms were to be distributed, and that the poor should gather round the door of the vain-glorious giver.

But in whatever way we give, if this be our motive, that we may be seen and admired of men, we shall be left to this as our whole reward. The righteous decree of the moral governor of the world is, that men shall have that which they prefer. And who can complain of this? Yet who can be satisfied with it, if he seeks the applause of men? For how small is the intrinsic value of the approbation of a creature, who, not being able to look into the heart, cannot judge of the moral worth of actions; and who, if he could see that we designed merely to purchase applause, must repay us with pity, or contempt! Grant, however, that we gain our object; how evanescent! How soon will the eye that glistens with admiration of our benevolence, be dim with sickness, or be closed in death! How justly shall we be punished with the recollection, that, in making man our God, and his approbation the ultimate motive of our good works, we have had our reward.

See, then, the wisdom and the beauty of that which forms the peculiarity of our religion; that we make a secret of our charities, as if we wished to hide from our left hand what our right hand was giving. For thus we spare the feelings of those whom we relieve, and often double the gift, by the

modest grace of the manner; while we subdue our own pride and mortify our depraved propensity to glory over those we relieve. Is it not an advantage to us to be shut up to the sole motive that sanctifies our gift, a benevolent solicitude to benefit our poor brother, and a grateful concern to please and glorify him that has indulged us with the privilege of giving? Are we afraid that we shall lose our reward, if not seen and applauded by men? What! then, is not the infinite God theatre enough for us? Is it not an insult to him, to bring others into partnership with him in this concern? What is it that prompts the wish, of which we may all be conscious, to have our charities known? Is it that we assume to ourselves some merit in alms-giving? What! have we ought that we did not receive from the Divine bounty? And was it not, on this condition, that we should consider ourselves stewards, to administer to the wants of others? Should we not constantly study to crucify, at once, the pride of merit, and the selfishness of covetousness, by the cross of Christ? Let us cherish such a sense of the constant presence and overwhelming grandeur of Jehovah, that we shall not be able to think of anything but his acceptance; assured, that, not a cup of cold water, given for the sake of Christ, shall be forgotten in the day that shall bring to light a thousand secret charities, that will be sufficiently repaid by hearing him say, "Come, ye blessed, receive the kingdom prepared for you; for I was hungry and ye fed me; for in as much as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me: Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

2. In prayer, or the worship we pay to God, we should study to avoid hypocritical regard to the eye of man. In this, as in the former charge, our Redeemer seems absolutely to forbid, when his design is to proscribe, only comparatively: for as all our alms, so all our prayers, must not be offered where others may see; and as joining with others in subscriptions for the poor is not forbidden in Scripture, so it is not necessary for me to show that social prayer, and the united worship of the church have the special promise, that "whatever two or three agree to ask on earth shall be done for them of our Father who is in heaven." For "wherever

two or three are met together in my name," says our Redeemer, "there am I in the midst of them." Here, however, our Lord speaks of our own personal requests, which must form a most important part of our religion, and should be made as secret as possible. We must, therefore, not go for this purpose into places of worship, which are, in Catholic countries, open for the prayers of individuals, as well as of congregations; nor must we, like the hypocritical Jews, who stood in the synagogues, or in the corners of the streets, turn that which should have been a sacrifice to God, into incense to our own vanity and pride. For private prayer, we should retire into the most private place, such as that which our Lord here calls the closet, where men may neither see nor hear us. We must make a secret, rather than a parade, of our personal religion. For if we really hold communion with God, we shall pant for the most private audience, feeling that we have business to transact with him that will admit the presence of no third party, even though it were the wife of our bosom, or "the friend who is as our own soul." The great affairs of our religious life should be carried on so secretly, that Christ almost seems to forbid all public prayer. The devotional study of the Scriptures, and other sacred exercises, will be equally promoted by the secresy of the closet.

What though man will not see us, and perhaps may never know that we thus retire, "morning, and evening, and noon," to converse with God alone? Do we pray to men, or to God? Are we seeking their approbation, or asking favours of him? Are we afraid of losing any of the benefits, if it be kept a kind of state secret? Will not our invisible Father, who seeth in secret, reward us openly, so that our religion shall be like the tree, which, by hiding deep its root, produces more abundant fruit? The consciousness of sincerity, which constant, secret worship will produce, inspires "great boldness in the faith;" the strength we draw from heaven in the closet, we shall employ in the field, in the street, the market, or the church; and, from being closeted with the king, we shall come forth into the world, like Moses, who,

after forty days' communion with God on the mount, came down with his face shining so brightly with heavenly beams, that "the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold him for the glory of his countenance." At the day of retribution, a world of secret religion will be laid open to justify, before the universe, the sentence of the judge; "for the Lord cometh, who will bring to light the secrets of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart. Then shall every man have praise of God."*

But, as hypocrisy usually ends in apostacy, we shall, by worshipping God in secret, receive the negative reward of escape from the confusion and shame and misery of being unmasked before the world. For when have shameful exposures been made of the unsoundness of a religious profession, that may not be traced to a neglect of the religion of the closet? But, having already urged this duty fully, in another way, I forbear to enlarge, as I otherwise should have deemed it my duty to do, on so vital a point.

Our Saviour advances, from these general counsels, to give a particular directory for prayer. They who erred, by making their own personal devotion public, are here reproved for indulging in vain repetitions; as the heathen, who fancy that there is great efficacy in repeating the name of their God millions of times. The church of Rome also attaches merit to saying a certain number of ave marias and pater nosters. Here, however, Christ seems to refer to excessive length in prayer, arising from asking for the same thing over and over again, as if we would worry our Creator out of his gifts. Let us remember, then, that prayer was designed, neither to inform God, nor to change his mind; but to unfold, according to his own appointment, our sense of need, and to cast ourselves on his bounty and grace. For this purpose, we should employ a concise simplicity and a wise arrangement, of which our Saviour here gives us a beautiful specimen.

We should address our Creator, as a father to his genuine

^{* 1} Cor. iv. 5. † See Sermon on the Religion of the Closet.

worshippers, and as revealing his brightest glories among the blessed in heaven;* so that we may chasten our filial boldness with reverence, and our holy awe with believing confidence. The glory of his own name should be uppermost on our hearts, and, when we approach to worship, should be the first request of our lips. That he may reign on earth, as in the hearts of the blessed in heaven, we should regard as the consummation most devoutly to be wished; for his will, which is the law of the universe, should be our only rule. After these objects of supreme regard, we may think of our own interests; and, for the body, ask needful food,+ as the child seeks bread from its parent, contented with present supplies, and trusting him for the future. For the soul we should ask daily pardon, never forgetting our constant offences, nor our obligation to forgive others, as we ask God to forgive us; and, anxious that we may not repeat our offences, we should pray that we may not be given up to temptation, but be delivered from the evil one.

The rest of the prayer, usually termed the Doxology, is rejected by Griesbach as not genuine.

- * We are taught to look to our Father, "who is in heaven," because the hour is come, when the true worshippers should not look, as the Jews did, to the temple in Jerusalem, nor as the Samaritans to Mount Gerizim, but to "heaven itself, whither Jesus, the forerunner, is for us entered."
- † The difficulty of translating the Greek ἐπιούσιον may be inferred from the variety which reigns among the versions. Our phrase, "daily bread," which has little to recommend it, is derived from one Latin version; the other Latin translation, supersubstantialem, is badly derived from the etymology of the Greek, but conveys no meaning. The Syriac, τι δωδω bread of our necessity, is better, signifying that which we need to sustain our existence. This was what Martini intended by the Italian, per sostentamento. But there is probably an allusion to masters paying their labourers every evening by an allowance of bread, or to the emperors, who gave out bread to the people. The adjective ἐπιούσιον seems to be employed for what the Hebrew would express by the genitive of the noun, ἡμέραs, with the participle, ἐπιούσηs.

† The doxology, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, amen," seems to have been an addition of the fathers, or the church, like what is called the Gloria Patri, appended to the Psalms; and as the prayer stands in Luke xi. & 2, without the Doxology, we are

What a prayer! how beautiful! how wise! how pious! how concise! and yet how comprehensive! How admirably it embodies the direction, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things else shall be added to you;" and "learn from the birds of the air to be contented with present supplies, and trust the paternal providence of God for to-morrow." What a fearful evil sin appears, when we are taught to regard the forgiveness of the past, and preservation from temptation to future sins, as the essence of all that we have to ask of God. Let us beware of taking the liberty to alter this prayer, by saying, as some, "Forgive

confirmed in the conclusion that it is not of Divine authority. It is observable, however, that there are four differences between the prayer as contained in the Sermon on the Mount, and as recorded by Luke; and, if the doxology be retained, this would make a fifth and an important difference. Griesbach rejects from the text in Luke, "Deliver us from evil." Cyril of Jerusalem evidently knew not the Doxology. This, therefore, could not have been intended, as is generally supposed, to be used strictly as a form of prayer. For what authority can decide whether that of Matthew or that of Luke should be adopted? and if I should determine to take my form from Matthew, while my brother thinks he ought to derive his from. Luke; we should not be praying in the same, but in a different form; and, according to the proportion of four or five differences in so short a form, a Prayer-book, of ordinary size, would contain hundreds, if not thousands of differences, that would defeat the design of praying by a fixed form. Nor should it be passed by unnoticed, that the grand direction which Christ gave to the Christian church, to pray in his name, is not observed here, while many of the blessings which Christians need are, to say the least, not specifically noticed, particularly the influences of the Holy Spirit, which comprehend all good things for the soul and eternity. If, indeed, we judge from the connection in which it stands, we shall conclude that the Lord's prayer was designed to give directions for secret, rather than social worship. I am not unaware that the plural pronouns in the address, "Our Father," and "forgive us our sins," seem to imply the use of the prayer in the fellowship of the saints. I am not sure, however, that this is a valid answer; for, in giving directions for private prayer, to a whole assembly, such as that gathered round the Mount, a teacher might naturally express himself in this way. Like any other Scripture, this prayer may be quoted in our addresses to God, and should be carefully studied, as a platform, if not repeated in the ordinary way as a form of prayer.

us; for we ought to forgive others." It was manifestly Christ's design to compel us to forgive, if we wish to be able to pray.

3. With regard to fasting, or the mortification we impose upon ourselves, we are charged not to expose it to the eyes

of men.

That fasting is a Christian duty, equally with almsgiving and secret prayer, who that believes the Scriptures can doubt? But here, as in the two former duties enjoined, it is not the social, but the personal exercise that Christ designs to regulate. When we profess to join with a community in seeking God, by fasting joined with prayer, it must, of course, be known that we fast; but when we employ this important means of religion, solely on our own account, we should keep it, as much as possible, a secret. Far from imitating those Jews who rejected Christ, and who gave themselves a squalid and lugubrious appearance, contriving that men should see and admire their mortifications, thus falling into the absurd contradiction of being proud of their humility; we should retire to our secret closet for fasting, and when we come forth, it should be with our usual appearance, that no one may suspect that we have been thus engaged. It is enough for us that our Heavenly Father sees us, and will accept this act, by which we humble ourselves for our sins, own ourselves unworthy of the bread we eat, and labour to "keep under our body and bring it into subjection." All the happy effects shall be manifest, though the cause be unknown; for our Heavenly Father often brings to the light those sacred secrets. When the pious Flavel kept a day of fasting and prayer, on account of the sinful inhabitants of Dartmouth, where he lived, this was brought to light by means of the mob who assembled to burn him in effigy. We read his life, we venerate his character, and blush for our nature that men could so treat a man who could say with David, "I fasted and prayed for my enemy, as if it had been my brother." By other means, the secret is often revealed; for the pious well know, that eminent conformity to Christ, and consecration to his glory, come not by accident; for of our

selfishness, our worldliness, and our sloth, we may say, as our Lord did of other demons, "This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting."

Thus we have listened to the Saviour inculcating the sincere

heart; let us now hear him enforcing the necessity of

II. The undivided heart.

Jehovah complained of the ancient church, "They have a divided heart, now shall they be found faulty." There are two ways in which this is shown—by the accumulations of the rich, and the anxieties of the poor.

1. The sin of the rich—laying up treasures on earth, rather than in heaven.

If ever we are in danger of making void the commandments of God, by the traditions and comments of men, it is when we expound this prohibition. But, "he who said, thou shalt not steal," said also, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." Yet they who condemn and execute others, for violating the former law, spend their whole lives in sinning against the latter, and think themselves innocent. But why should we not deem the one as imperative and obligatory as the other? I know no reason but that which is supplied by the very covetousness here forbidden.

We are asked, does not Scripture itself, as well as nature and reason, say, "Fathers should lay up for their children," and not leave them to be a burthen to others? We answer. nature, if it means our fallen and depraved nature, is the worst of all counsellors, or expositors of Scripture; and what is called reason, is often any thing but that which deserves this dignified name; being, in reality, nothing but our false reasonings. There remains then, only Scripture to demand our notice. It is true that the inspired Apostle, not only uttered the words quoted, but also said, "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." But this care for our children can lawfully be extended no farther than providing food and raiment, with which we are commanded to be content, and that only, till they can provide for themselves by their own industry, which they should be taught to do. But this parental duty is made an excuse for heaping up fortunes, to push our children into higher stations of life, and, in fact, for evading the prohibition of the text. For when we say, "lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," men reply; "we do not for ourselves, it is for our children." Ah, poor children! Made the scapegoats to bear the sins of their parents! Pity them! Spare them! They have sins enough of their own, without loading them with ours! Let us, if we will be covetous, at least try to prove, that, in this one thing, a covetous man may be an honest one; by confessing, that we love to lay up treasures for ourselves, but, in order to palliate the sin to our own conscience, we say "it is for our children." Do we not intend that the treasure shall be ours, while we live? and every one knows that no thanks are due to us for leaving it to others when we die.

But, again, it is asked, "are we not sent to the ant, to learn wisdom of her that, in summer, lays up a store for winter, and thus teaches us to provide for sickness, or old age, that we may not be a burthen to others?" We answer; this, again, can extend to nothing more than providing for food and raiment; and therefore cannot justify accumulating wealth that we neither expect, nor intend, to use. Nor should it be forgotten, that this futurity, for which we are so anxious to provide, is utterly uncertain; and before, either we, or our children, can use the treasure, death may have removed us from it. In fine; after making every concession that can reasonably be demanded of the expositor; we must conclude that, beyond a provision for real necessities, every guinea that is laid up, to accumulate treasure, is accompanied with the guilt of sinning against the prohibition of Christ.

And this, like all other sins, is mere folly. For how justly are we charged not to trust to uncertain riches! Moth and rust corrupt and spoil them, and thieves break through and steal them, which is said in allusion to ancient custom, when treasures consisted of immense wardrobes of clothes, and large sums of coin in chests, as well as heaps of corn in granaries; for the funds of modern times were then unknown, and many of the modes by which we make money productive were little used. James, therefore, said to the rich, "Your garments are moth-eaten, and the rust of your silver and gold

is a witness against you." But the word which we render rust, may be applied to the eating of corn by vermin; while we all know that thieves may break in and steal our treasures; and by how many other unexpected ways do "riches make to themselves wings, and fly away, swift as an eagle!" What we would not give away, God justly takes away; and we deprive ourselves of the pleasure and profit of giving, in order to save (as we intend), but to endure the mortification of being cheated or robbed, as the event often proves.

If you, my friends, would have treasures in a safe place, lay them up in heaven-by giving to the poor, which is, lending to the Lord; and by offering your substance on God's altar, saying with David, when he offered millions to the building of the temple, "Of thine own we give thee." There no moth, nor rust, nor thieves destroy; you never can lose your reward; and your interest shall be, not five per cent, but a hundred fold. This evidence of grace; this proof of the sincerity of our faith, when it works by love, and overcomes the world; this certainty of a rich reward, is such a treasure to a Christian, that the Apostle speaks of it in language so strong as almost to appear to give sanction to the doctrine of purchasing future rewards by the merit of alms. " Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."—1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

"Sell what thou hast," said Christ, to the rich young man, "and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." "What I gave, I have; what I kept I lost;" was inscribed on the tomb of Robert of Doncaster. But never shall we lose what we gave to God and his poor; for "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, in that you ministered to the saints." If we make heaven our treasury, it will draw up our hearts thither, while other treasures will drag us down to earth. As surely as plants turn towards the sun, or the magnetic needle, towards the pole,

the heart of man will turn towards his treasure; let it be what it may, or where it may. If, therefore, the purity of your motives, or the undivided consecration of your hearts to God, be of importance in your esteem, reflect, that the mental vision is darkened by a covetous and worldly mind; while the whole soul is illuminated by a single eye to God and heaven, just as the body is by good clear sight. Let us not fancy that we can be at once sincere servants of the God of heaven, and of the mammon of wealth; for, if we love the world and its possessions, the Saviour warns us here, and in other parts of his word, that we hate God. This I know has a harsh sound, so that it is thought by many better to say, we do not duly love him; for they ask how can any be so wicked as to hate him? But surely the meek and gentle Saviour, and friend of sinners, is not chargeable with any unnecessary harshness of judgment, or of speech; and he said, we must love the one, and hate the other. I know, indeed, that towards such a being as God, we are slow to think ourselves guilty of hatred. Yet the fair appearance which the covetous heart bears, is but like the apparent purity of a lake, while undisturbed, which, when agitated by the storm, shows the filth that lurked below. Cicero, the pride of antiquity, said, when bereaved of his child, "I hate the very gods, who have hitherto been so kind to me." How often has the covetous man, when stripped of his wealth, given vent to most unequivocal expressions of enmity to God! But, if we love God, we shall cleave to him, instead of money, which we shall hate and despise, when opposed to the supreme regard we owe to God. Why, then, do we, in defiance of Christ's warning, accumulate treasures on earth, and fancy that we still love God? How justly did a wise and good man comment on these words, "I would rather enter into their true spirit, than possess all the silver and gold in the world." To have laid up a treasure in heaven, and to have our hearts in that world of purity and bliss, revelling amidst its holy joys, makes us richer now, than the miser whose heart is turning towards his money, which gives more care than pleasure; and, when we die, we go to take possession of the treasure we have sent before us to the skies; when he is torn from his

wealth, at death, and at judgment, seeing the last fire burn up his estate, will exclaim, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I left?"

2. The sin of the poor is anxious care for want of wealth. This is as expressly forbidden as covetousness; for Christ no more flatters the poor than the rich. If some hoard up money, and make fine gold their confidence and their guard against future want; others, who have not this security, are in danger of anxiety about food and raiment. What we render, "take no thought," strictly means, anxious care. In many of the employments of life, especially the culture of the field, by which the "king himself is served," it is necessary to exercise forethought, and provide to-day for the duty of to-morrow. " But I would have you without carefulness," says the Apostle: " be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus."

As to food; that very life which is sustained by it, is itself sustained by the power of God, and you cannot, by all your anxiety, prolong it one cubit. Look at the birds that alight at your door to pick up the crumbs; you know that they have heaped up no store in barns, and yet your heavenly Father extends his providential care to keep them from dying of want. Can you think that he will feed his birds, and starve his sons? As to raiment, look at the lilies* of the field, and observe how rapidly they grow; and, though they spin no clothes, so beautifully are they adorned, as to texture and colour, that Solomon, though a proverb for magnificent adorning, was not, in the glory of one of his state days, arrayed like one of these flowers that may be

^{*} This has been, by some interpreters, concluded to mean, what they call, the Persian lily, or the crown imperial; of which, they say, crowns or garlands were made. Julian is quoted, saying of a poor man, "He is more naked than a lily." If there were such a proverbial expression, derived from the corolla of the flower being naked, or unclothed by a calix, it would illustrate our Lord's words, as commending the nakedest of flowers above the best adorned of kings.

found wild among the grass of the field. Can you, then, suppose that your heavenly Father will adorn his flowers, and not provide needful clothes for his children? How small must be your faith, if you cannot trust a kind and universal Providence, to secure to you those things which your heavenly Parent knows to be needful, as well as you do! Leave it to heathens to worship a God they cannot trust; but you, knowing that to be anxious is to be heathenish, should lay aside anxiety about to-morrow, which you may never see; and, if you do, you may find, that, with the day has come its provision, as if the morrow had taken thought for itself. At all events, as each day's care comes soon enough, we should not burthen one day with the troubles of another. But, instead of suffering the anxieties of this life to turn away your attention from the concerns of eternity, "Seek first that the reign of God may be set up in your heart, which will be life and food to your soul, and seek that righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe;" a robe that waxes not old, and then you will have, by covenant and by oath, all things else that are needful for you. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Bearing then, in lively remembrance, the sincerity which our Lord inculcates; let us make the practical application of this discourse. It will naturally divide our attention among four classes of persons.

1. Those who have no treasure, either in heaven or on earth.

Men sometimes make a righteousness of their poverty, and from vague and confused notions of what God says concerning the poor, fancy, that by their destitution on earth, they shall acquire eternal wealth. "The poor have, indeed, the Gospel preached to them;" and while other things are put out of their reach by the high price demanded for them, the best and most durable of blessings are within the grasp of the poorest, being given freely, "without

money and without price." But if the poor would be eternally blessed, merely for their poverty, why preach the Gospel to them? If we have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, we may well "take joyfully the spoiling of our goods," knowing that, "in heaven we have a better and an enduring substance." If, instead of laying up treasures on earth, we have given them to the poor, or expended them in the propagation and support of religion, we may exult that we have a treasure in heaven. But if our poverty is the effect of sin, and we resemble the prodigal son, who, by wasting his substance in riotous living, "began to be in want," and would "fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat, and no man gave to him," such poverty gives no evidence of heavenly wealth, but is an anticipation of the everlasting misery due to sin. "Without holiness, no man, whether rich or poor, can see the Lord."

Who can look at the desolation and misery of many wicked men, without exclaiming, "the way of transgressors is hard," and remembering that wickedness, like drowsiness, will "bring a man to a morsel of bread?" How many have already found that there is a hell in sin, and have in this a solemn monitor, a sure pledge, that there is a hell for sin. Why, then, do men doom themselves to double torments? Why not remember that "the wages of sin is death?" that iniquity is the hard task-master, by whose service a man cannot live; and that while they are destitute of the things needful for the body here, they doom themselves to the everlasting destitution of a soul cast out from the presence of God and the abodes of bliss? O "ye that have no money, come, buy salvation, without money and without price."

2. Those who have a treasure on earth, but not in heaven. While some vainly hope that their poverty will buy for them a heaven, others as fondly imagine, that they are favourites of God, because they are prosperous in the world. Can both these opposite notions be true? They may, however, both be false. There is, in fact, no evidence of salvation to be derived, either from poverty, or wealth.

Appearances are more favourable for the poor; for the Scriptures often alarm the rich by such expressions as startle us, and make us cry, with the Apostles, "Lord, who shall be saved?" This they said, on hearing their Master declare, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

"So foolish was I," says the Psalmist; "I was as a beast before thee; for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Lo these are the ungodly that prosper in the world, they increase in riches." How small an affair is it to be rich for a few years, and poor for endless ages! to have comforts diffused over the space of a span, and misery stretched out to the extent of eternity! Nor, even now, do these earthly treasures satisfy, but often create more pain than pleasure, by the anxious fears awakened, lest thieves should break through and steal, or lest, by circumstances which we cannot control, "riches should take to themselves wings, and fly away towards heaven swift as an eagle." In our days, nobles have become wanderers and beggars; and a king was a schoolmaster, to procure bread. But, if nothing else rob us of our wealth, death will; and the thought of this, haunting many a rich man, sprinkles gall and wormwood over all his dainties. Johnson, looking at a fine mansion and its beautiful grounds, said to the owner, "Ah! sir, these are the things that make a man unwilling to die." But to have it said to us in eternity, "Remember, thou hast had thy good things," will make the pain of the loss endure, when the pleasure of the possession has vanished. They who have a paradise on earth will find it doubly hard to be shut out of that in heaven. For the abuse of riches, we must give an account, when God shall say, "thou mayest be no longer steward." Many of the excuses for the neglect of religion which poor men urge, the rich cannot assign. You have, or might have, your time more at command, and should be more independent in your movements, than those who have their daily bread to earn, and are placed in subjection to the will of others. But to what lengths might I go in calling up to your remembrance the mighty and affecting motives that should prevent your taking satisfaction in perishing riches, and should stimulate you to sacrifice every thing to the durable riches of righteousness? If there are few rich men that enter the kingdom of heaven, you should be the more anxious to be found among the happy few; and if your circumstances oppose hindrances, that make your salvation impossible to men, remember, that it is possible to God, and that from him you should seek the omnipotent influence that could make a camel pass through the eye of a needle, or a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven.

3. Those who have a treasure in heaven and none on earth. "You see your calling, brethren, that not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." If, by your poverty, you are said to be shut out of good company, the pious poor are admitted into the best society. Jesus Christ, "though he was rich, for our sakes became a poor man;" and God "takes the beggar from the dunghill to set him amongst the princes of his people." He has given you the better part that shall not be taken from you. If any say to you, "you have nothing but your God," take up their words, re-echo them, "Nothing, but my God!" That is every thing. No moth, nor rust, can corrupt this treasure; no thief can rob you of it; for these are the "durable riches of righteousness." Having, then, food and raiment, let us therewith be content, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The industry that religion inculcates, and the prudence it inspires, of which temperance is the handmaid, are usually followed by that blessing which secures what is absolutely needful for the body; and, seeing your comforts come to you every day, as if immediately from the hand of God, you taste in them a sweetness which confirms the assurance, that "a little which a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked."

Think not that you are cut off from the luxury of doing good. See that poor widow, who possesses no more than

"two mites, which make one farthing;" she casts into the treasury of the temple more than all the rich, with all their abundance. If the sacrifice of your time, which is a poor man's stock, the kind attentions and good counsels you administer, and the interest you employ with the rich, in behalf of the poor, be the two mites that you can give; let it suffice you, that God appreciates it more highly than many splendid offerings. If you thus do good, and enjoy good; while you live, to you death is stript of much that is repulsive; for, instead of tearing you from your wealth, it will but send you to take possession of your fortune. Should not then the contentment, the thankfulness, the reliance on your Father's care, and the benevolent heavenly mind that you display, prove to the world that God's poor are the truly rich?

4. Those who have treasures, both on earth and in heaven. You, my friends, have double motives for being faithful to your own souls; for, if men are apt to praise themselves when they prosper; and "others will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself; flatterers blessing the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth;" if even the fearless preachers of righteousness, and the purest churches of Christ, are not always duly faithful to the rich; how faithful should they be to themselves! You have, on the one hand, every thing to excite your gratitude; on the other, every thing to alarm your fears. If "not many rich, mighty, or noble are called," how anxious should you be to have good evidence that you form the rare exceptions! So important are good works, and the faithful improvement of wealth, to the evidence of a rich man's piety, that we have seen an inspired Apostle go to the length of almost seeming to make their charity the foundation of their hope for eternal life. But, while we know, that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;" we know also, that, upon this foundation must be reared the edifice of holiness and usefulness. By these fruits we enjoy a good foundation for our hope of being recognized at last, as "built upon the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

LECTURE VII.

THE FOURTH ON CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATT. vii.

ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

At the close of one of his divine discourses, our Redeemer said to his disciples, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." For he never taught us to value ourselves on mere knowledge, fine theories, sublime conceptions, which play like moonlight upon ice, but remind us, that, "while knowledge puffeth up, it also vanisheth away; while charity edifieth and endureth for ever." All the value of just notions lies in their tendency to give a right direction to the will, and, through it, to the active powers of man. Christ is now conducting us to the close of the longest and most renowned of his sermons, and, as he approaches to the goal, he pours upon us the conviction, that in vain have we consented to his doctrine, and been entranced by his eloquence; if we are not disposed to go, and reduce his maxims to practice. Let us intreat him to bless us with this obedient mind, while we finish our meditation on the Sermon on the Mount, by a devout consideration of

I. Self-condemnation, in opposition to censoriousness: v. 1—6.

Strange as it may appear, it is a part of the perverseness of our nature; that we are prone to be plunged, by a searching discourse, not into self-research and self-condemnation, but into the very opposite temper and practice, censoriousness and the condemnation of our neighbours. Some striking and afflictive instances are recorded of faithful sermons, which probed the heart to the very core, being followed by a loud declaration of some one hearer's con-

viction that the discourse suited certain persons in the audience, when it was known to be more applicable to the very man who made the remark. Christ, therefore, having unmasked the hypocrite, who paraded his alms, and prayers, and fasting, now charges us to beware of judging others. This is not our business, but is forbidden, as a sin; for "who art thou that judgest another?" Leave to the Searcher of hearts this delicate and difficult task, and be thankful that it is not made thy duty. For if, in defiance of this prohibition, we rush into the judgment seat, and pass our condemnatory sentence, we shall find that, by the just judgment of the Supreme Judge, it is turned upon ourselves; as, when David answered Nathan's parable, by saying, "The rich man that showed no mercy to the poor, shall surely die," the prophet said, "Thou art the man;" or, when Ahab said to the reprover, "So shall thy sentence be, thou thyself hast pronounced it," but was told that the prophet had but made himself an image of the king. Woe to us who are censorious, if with the same judgment with which we judge, we come to be judged.

Those who will judge, show that they are not fit for this work; for we should first have applied the searching instruction of our Lord, to judge ourselves, before we could be fit to pass sentence upon others; which would have been like taking the splinter out of our own eye, clearing our own perceptions, and rectifying our own moral character, that we might enjoy the nice discernment required for taking the mere mote of dust out of our brother's eye. The contrary course brands us with the odious name of hypocrites; since a sincere hatred of sin would have been first turned upon our own faults; as he that hates a serpent at all, will hate it most in his own bosom. It is both more practical, and more imperative to oppose iniquity in ourselves, than it can be in others, whose moral character and conduct are not so much under our own control. Severity against sin in our own breasts, must be virtuous and benevolent; but opposition to it in others, may be mere gross malignity, or a refined way of rejoicing in iniquity, taking pleasure in the

detection, rather than in the cure. When shall we learn from the benevolent Searcher of hearts, how to deal with our own characters and with that of others?

But, while Christians allow themselves to judge their brother, and condemn him for his faults, they expose religion to the contempt of the common enemy, abandoning the character of saints, which is a holy thing, to the censure of the wicked; as if the worshippers in the temple had given the meat of the sacred sacrifice to be devoured by the dogs. Such conduct is like flinging pearls on the ground, before swine, which not knowing their value, would not only trample on them as worthless things, but turn and tear in pieces those who would appear to have tantalized the greedy animal with what it could not eat. Let, then, our brother's character be sacred in our eye, as a sacrifice offered to God, and precious as a pearl that might adorn the sceptre of state. For if we, instead of turning our censures upon ourselves, love to pour them on our fellow Christians, we shall find that our very selfishness defeats its own end, and we shall be torn and devoured by that enemy whom we have let loose upon others. Far more holy, benevolent and blessed will be this application of our Saviour's warning, than that which is too often made, by closing our lips on sacred subjects, and refraining from profitable conversation, in the presence of the wicked, lest we should cast pearls before swine.

Another practical application of our Saviour's discourse, enjoins,

II. Prayer for the Divine blessing on the preaching of the word: v. 7—11.

For, in this sense, I take the reinculcation of prayer, here, after the directions given for it in the preceding chapter. We may naturally suppose that the preacher saw his more attentive and faithful hearers thrown into a state of thoughtfulness, bordering on despondency, by the exalted morality he taught. For who will deny that we are in danger of saying, "Such sanctity is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain to it?" Then ask it of him, who is "able

to do exceeding abundantly, above all we can ask or think." For this, there are given to us, first, general directions, and then, encouraging illustrations.

1. General directions for prayer: v. 7, 8.

"Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." If we owe all the common blessings of life to the kind providence of God, "who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;" how much more the higher blessings of religion! It is, therefore, the doctrine of Scripture, that God giveth us that which appertains to life and godliness. Let sceptics employ what they call reason against prayer; we know that reason echoes to the Scriptures, when they assure us, that "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, or shadow of turning."

Must not "he that gave us these souls," with all their wondrous faculties, have the most intimate access to them, and the most perfect command over them? And is it not worthy of his sanctity, benevolence and power, to sway our souls to that conformity to his will, which will bring them up to the lofty standard of virtue that our Lord here exhibits? It is enough for us that he has bidden us seek. We will obey; assured that he has "never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." When he says, "Knock, and it shall be opened to you," he alludes to the practice of ancient governors, who allowed their subjects to apply at their gate for what was sought at their hands. One of these rulers was so ambitious of being thought ready to attend to every petitioner, that he hung up a bell, which every one might ring, and be sure of immediate attention to his request. If, then, the Apostle urges children to obey their parents, by the consideration that "this was the first command, with promise, that it should be well with them;" should we not diligently obey commands to which promises are thus appended, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you?"

When our Lord further confirms this, by asserting, that

"every one that asketh, receiveth," may we not appeal to facts, and say, "Did you ever know a man of prayer that did not receive from heaven, in proportion to the diligence and fervour of his supplications? Are not such persons assured of this themselves? Do they not persist in their hallowed course, from a conviction that experience shows the efficacy of prayer? Have not some of them said, "In every embarrassment, I will seek counsel of a friend that never deceived me?" And have not others gone, in a time of need, to the throne of grace, with the same confidence with which a child applies to a parent for food? If, then, the promise of heaven, on the one hand, and the experience of earth, on the other, urge us to the throne of grace, who shall we blame but ourselves, if we want any good thing? If we have not, it is because we ask not; for "every one that asketh, receiveth."

2. The encouraging illustration of this, is in v. 9-11.

The God of nature has placed our earliest resources in the hands of parents; while the children have nothing but wants, except that they have an interest in the parents' hearts, whose affections are such, that the children are as sure of obtaining needful relief, as if they had the family resources at their own command, with this advantage, that the parent has more wisdom than the children, to secure the right application of his fortune. But if a parent would not refuse needful bread, much less would he mock the child with a useless stone, or injure him with a poisonous serpent. Now, who gave these parental feelings? Who inspired a father's heart with such yearnings towards his offspring, that, while he has food, his children cannot ask it in vain? Was it not the God of nature, who placed us in these relations towards each other, and bound us together with the bond of parent and child, and all the tender relations of life? If, then, these are from God, he must possess such charities, and in him, as the fountain, must reside all the kindness of a father's heart. But there is this difference, that we are evil; for so the Scripture invariably represents us; and, therefore, even the yearnings of nature are disturbed by the fall; and we are, when under the full influence of our depravity, "without natural affection;" so that a "woman may forget her sucking child, and her eye be evil towards the son of her womb;" while our heavenly Father has celestial charities, an infinity of kindness, as high above ours as the heavens are high above the earth. Will not such a Father give good things to them that ask him? This, in the correspondent passage in Luke, is explained, by saying, "he will give the Holy Spirit," teaching us that this includes all good things. Ask it, ye that are parents, with the confidence that should be prompted by the monitor within, the consciousness that you would give bread to your hungry child; seek it, ye that are children, with the assurance that should be inspired by your own experience of a parent's readiness to give you food. Ask this Holy Spirit, all ye children of men; for it is the food of souls, without which you faint, you die; but with which you grow up, nourished to immortal strength. With this assurance, you may venture on any thing great and good; and, therefore, on the arduous task here prescribed.

III. Entrance on all the difficulties of the Christian life.

I am not quite sure what is the connection of v. 12; but I am inclined to think it shows how lofty is the rule of Christian morals, and, therefore, how arduous is the course which the Christian is called to pursue. For, while this is called the golden rule, "All things that ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" we must see that this, if as pure and precious as gold, is as rare and difficult to be attained. It, is, however, but a practical comment on what our Lord calls the second commandment of the law, in allusion to the second tablet given from Mount Sinai, in which our duties to man are thus prescribed: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." By this rule, we are made our own casuists, are furnished with a monitor within our own breasts, and, in every emergency, may consult an infallible guide. We know what we wish men should do to us; and though our wishes might be extravagant and injurious, when we have nothing but their conduct to us

in our eye; yet, when this is to become the guide for our conduct to them, then our wishes are rectified and made sober and just, so as to become a safe guide. Thus, also, we are furnished with a motive for following this guide; for the consciousness that we should wish others to do so to us. goads us on, to overcome our selfish reluctance to render what we owe to them; knowing that our own turn may come, and we may be treated as our previous conduct deserves. Here the conceit and self-importance that would set up our own interests above others, are beaten down, and we are taught that we stand upon a level with our fellow men, and are bound to love them as ourselves. In this one rule is included all that the law of Moses, or the inspired prophets have said concerning our duty to man; so that, in conforming to this precept, we make the whole word of God our guide. An attempt to interpret any Scripture in opposition to this, gives a crooked turn to a straight rule.

Is this a narrow way to walk in? I know it, says our Divine Teacher; then, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for it leads to life." Do you find it hard to pass through? I know it; but struggle, strive, force your way; though you see the road to which it leads is narrow, hedged in closely on each hand; and though it seems so repulsive that few have resolution to walk in it. Would you refuse to pass through the straits of Gibraltar, to escape the storms of the bay of Biscay, and enter into a safe harbour? If the road is narrow; it is because it is hedged in from danger, from a fiery gulf on the one hand, and from a dreadful precipice on the other; while, to a steady, cautious passenger, a narrow road is wide enough. What though few walk in it; of these few, each one is precious, worth more than the whole crowd of the wicked. Is not one Jesus a counterpoise to the world that rejected him? Were not the three Hebrews of more value than the multitude that bowed down to the golden image? Characters and friends, like arguments, should be weighed, rather than counted. Remember, it is for your life, and "all that a man has will he give for his life;" it is for your life, and that will amply repay the struggles it may cost. If you find that you have escaped from the general wreck, with but a chosen few, the more conspicuous will be your good fortune, and the more ardent your gratitude.

Why should the wide gate allure you? Would you enter a dungeon, or take up your lodging in a condemned cell, because the gate was fine and large, like the beautiful gate of the Jewish temple? If the road to ruin be wide, so is the sandy desert of Africa, or Arabia, in which whole armies have been swallowed up. None but the intoxicated need a wide road to reel about in; or think it an advantage to rise at all hours, from morn till night. Will it comfort us, at last, to be huddled into the burning gulf with such a mass of fuel, as will increase the flame to fury? These are the friendly expostulations of Him, whose eye darts to the end of both roads, and who waits to receive with approbation, such as struggle through the difficulties, to enjoy the rewards of piety. He will prove to us, at last, that, though few were seen on the road, many will be found in the heaven to which it leads. For so truly are the pious called God's hidden ones, that we are often deceived, like Elijah, who thought he was left alone, when God had reserved to himself seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Those who die before the years of maturity, never swell the apparent number of the travellers, but may be found among the ransomed, who will increase Christ's triumphs, multiply our companions, and augment our joys. A time is coming which will alter the ordinary course of affairs; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and "a multitude whom no man can number," shall surround the throne of the Lamb. We must now turn, with our Redeemer, to two classes of persons, preachers and hearers.

1. With regard to preachers, we are charged to judge of them, and treat them, according to their works.

The Divine Teacher, having come to give us an example as well as a lesson, bids us shun all who do not, in this, imitate him. We should be the more aware of these; because they sometimes resemble a wolf, that might be supposed to obtain admittance into the fold, by putting on the fleece of a sheep;

and thus appearing gentle and harmless. But whatever sanctimonious garb a teacher of religion may wear, whatever fair, or sacred names, he may assume; if he act the part of a wolf, whose ravenous nature leads him to devour and to destroy, we have a sure test that he is a deceiver. Such teachers of religion, therefore, as set themselves to make a gain of the flock, exacting what is not necessary for the support of an humble labourer, and assuming dominion over the souls of men, prove, by these works, that they are false prophets, and no more Christ's ministers than those bushes that produce thorns, instead of grapes or figs, are vines or fig-trees. A good minister cannot be greedy of men's property, or of domination over their persons; any more than a good tree can bear vile fruits.

Be assured, then, that all trees which produce fruits so bitter, as covetousness and tyranny, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire, when God shall come, to set up his kingdom, and "cast out from it every thing that offendeth." This certain, tremendous, impending doom, should induce the Church to avoid false teachers; for who would gather fruits from a tree, that God will command to be cut down and burnt as pernicious? Who would receive for a pastor, one, whom the chief Shepherd will, at last, punish, as a ravening wolf? Away, then, with the vile maxim, invented by such deceivers, to impose on their hearers, "You must do as we say, and not as we do." For what does this amount to, but bidding us despise Christ's charge, to beware of such as, under a sheep's skin, bring into the fold a wolf's heart? If preachers are not to be tried by their works, who are? Can we look for any thing from the instructions of wicked men, but universal corruption; so that it shall be said, "Like priest, like people?" What has rendered the church of Christ so guilty, and in just judgment, so wicked, as the notion that worldly ministers should be tolerated? What reform can be so effectual, as that of insisting upon preachers confirming their doctrines by their lives? In all ages, the Church has been recovered from decays, and the world gathered to Christ, by holy men, who have given to the

ministry a new and exalted character. For, as nothing sinks religion so much, in the estimation of mankind, as the worldly lives of ministers; so nothing can be an effectual remedy for this evil, but the exhibition of holiness, embodied in the persons of preachers. It was not merely the miraculous powers, but the holy lives of the Apostles, that won the victory for the Christian faith. Wicked ministers make wicked hearers; for the sins of preachers are their loudest sermons; but, when men are compelled to say of a pastor, as the ancient woman did of the Prophet, "I perceive that this is a holy man of God;" they feel that such ministers, at once prove the truth of their doctrine, and bring its authority to bear with irresistible force upon the heart. By the close of this discourse of our Lord, we are, therefore, authorised to demand that all those who venture to re-echo his words, should reflect his image, and be "living epistles of the Lord, known and read of all men."

2. With regard to hearers, we are taught that they only are safe who practise what they hear.

For though it is a most exalted privilege to listen to such words as Christ uttered, it is not enough to stand around the mount of the beatitudes; it is not enough to commit these words to memory, and repeat them to others; or even to work, in Christ's name, miracles that may astonish the world: for if we practise not these precepts, but, with words of piety on our lips, work iniquity in our lives, the profession of Christ's name will be spurned by him as an insult. Would you, then, see a lively image of one whom Christ will not be ashamed to own as a disciple? He is the man who was not satisfied with hearing, or with understanding, or with admiring, or with applauding, but instantly set himself to practise what he knew. For this is the striking characteristic of the Christian religion, that it has nothing that resembles the abstractions of ancient philosophy, which, when learned, was of no further use; but all Christ's words are designed, through the understanding, to reach the heart, and by it to sway the life. He, therefore, who having heard, proceeds to practise, is compared by our Lord to a man who, intending to build a

house, digs deep and lays the foundation in a rock. For though we are assured "that rock is Christ," and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;" yet the man who acts according to Christ's directions proves himself the person who, by faith, builds on this rock. The edifice will be as the foundation is. No man truly builds on Christ who does not obey him. "Faith worketh by love, and purifieth the heart. Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

This, this is the wise man. For what is a greater proof of wisdom than the exact application of things to their proper end? In this, the wise is distinguished from the knowing. The latter has accumulated stores which he cannot properly apply; while the former makes every thing available to some important use. To hear Christ's instructions concerning the way of life, and to practise them, by walking in that way, is to be "wise to salvation." To know our duty and to practise it, is the sign of one who has seen things in their connexions and consequences, which is a definition of true philosophy. This gave rise to the inspired proverb, "The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness; the heart of the wise is at his right hand, but a fool's heart at his left." For the decision of character, which makes what may be called a right-handed application of knowledge, is the test of wisdom.

But this wise builder must be severely tried, that his wisdom may be duly appreciated. "The rains will descend, and the floods rise, and the winds blow and beat upon his house." For religion is proved by trials, as gold by fire. "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Many of the graces of religion are of that nature that makes it absolutely necessary they should be tested by afflictions. The faith that receives Christ for salvation is proved to be genuine by withstanding the sophistry of deceivers, and expecting all that God has promised, in defiance of unfavourable appearances. The patience that Christ has inculcated, and a be-

liever practises, cannot be proved to exist but by means of sufferings. The preference for heaven, which is ready to sacrifice to it all on earth, must be brought out to view by such a trial as Paul says he endured in "the loss of all things" for Christ's sake. To such storms, therefore, the wise man, who builds on the rock, must be exposed. Then, "beloved, think it not strange" (says Peter) "concerning the fiery trial that is to try you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ."

The genuine disciple will stand in the day of fiercest storm. The faith which leads to practice is that which unites us to Christ, and then who shall separate us? "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The practical Christian is found firm in trials. The same heavenly wisdom that led him to do all that Christ commanded, in spite of the seductions of sloth and sensual pleasure, leads him to suffer all that our Lord inflicts, unmoved from the hope of the Gospel, by all that earth or hell may do to "overthrow the faith of some." Confessors suffer in prisons, exulting that "the word of God is not bound," but exerts its triumphant influence over their spirits, to make them "glory in tribulations." Martyrs bleed at the stake, "not counting their lives dear to themselves, that they may finish their course with joy." This is the consequence of being founded on the rock Christ, for "he that believeth on him shall never be ashamed."

But as for those who hear Christ's words, and do them not, they are compared to "a foolish man, who built his house on the sand." Yet many who hear the Gospel, take some credit to themselves for understanding and even admiring it; but when they see a person setting himself heartily to practise it, they smile at his simplicity, and affect to be too wise to be thus carried away. Such hearers there are, who sit all their days under the sound of Christ's voice, and

so far make a profession of religion; but they know, and others know, that they are living in the practical neglect of obedience. On what, then, do they build their hopes of heaven? On the sand. They will say, at the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works?" For preachers may be found among the unprofitable hearers; and even an apostle may have done many great miraculous works, and hear the Judge say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Was not Judas such a one? Him, perhaps, our Lord then had in his eye. That the traitor wrought miracles, as well as the other Apostles, we may conclude; though he sold his Lord for the "wages of iniquity." Ministers that preach to others are themselves but hearers of the Chief Shepherd, and are as much bound to take heed that they do his commandments, as those to whom they preach; or rather are much more bound, lest their own doctrine should condemn them. This made an Apostle say, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

The foolish builders who erect their hopes on a quick-sand, and trust to mere hearing of instructions, which they do not obey, will be exposed to storms, as well as the wise. Circumstances will occur which will shake the mere professor. Their bodies are not made of brass, but are exposed to disease; their fortunes are not immutable, but are liable to strange reverses; their minds, too, may be shaken with anxiety, gloom, and dread; and, finally, they must meet the king of terrors, death, and "God, the judge of all." But, when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds beat upon that house built upon the sand; how can it stand? Like those mud cottages which were swept away by the mountain torrent, to which our Lord alludes, they will fall. The man who did not practise Christ's words never truly believed them; and, therefore, when adverse circumstances

arise, or the mind is tried by distressing doubts and dark misgivings, or when persecutions make a religious profession dangerous; or the approach of death, and the judgment-seat shake the soul to its centre, this man has nothing to sustain him, but he falls and perishes in utter despair.

And great is the fall. The ruin of an immortal soul is the greatest calamity in the universe. The wreck of whole worlds of mere material existence, is a vulgar disaster, compared with the loss of a thinking, sentient creature, capable of knowing and enjoying God. Could the loss of the soul be proved to consist in its annihilation, this would be worthy of the tears of a universe. For, when that which might have enjoyed an infinity of life, by the eternity of its duration, is blotted out for ever from the book of the living, a loss is sustained which no finite mind can calculate. But to live only to feel eternal death; to escape the loss of being, that we may know the privation of holiness and bliss; to survive sufficiently to shed burning tears over the wreck of our fortunes and our hopes; is such a fall, that he who knew the grandeur of eternity, and looked down with just disdain on the pettinesses of time, himself pronounced it "great."

But even this is not the worst; for souls that never heard Christ's words, never rose so high, and therefore cannot fall so low, as those to whom he says, "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

The preaching of Christ must always elevate us above the degradation in which it found us. The moral probation that he produces awakens our moral sense to some, if to an imperfect action; and makes the wide gulf between good and evil stare us in the face. The eternal prospects opened to us by him that has brought life and immortality to light, lifts us up from our grovelling upon earth, to stretch the wings of imagination and anticipate a future everlasting state of being. But sometimes hope too expands her wings, though not the

"hope that maketh not ashamed;" for the hope of the hypocrite who hears, but does not obey, is like the giving up of the ghost, the last expiring gasp of the dying man. And then, how great is the fall! From a glimpse of heaven to the depths of hell! From false hopes to real despair! From the sound of a Gospel that should have saved us, to the condemnation of the unprofitable hearer, who feels that what does not save doubly ruins! To find that "this is the condemnation" by emphasis, "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light; because their deeds were evil!" "Hell from beneath is stirred up to meet" such a one; they who never heard Christ's words of life, but perished in their sins against the light of nature, saying, with astonishment, to the hearer of the Gospel, "Art thou also become like unto us?" "Ah! would that I were but like unto you," he will reply; "for it is more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for me." But I forbear to attempt a description of the ruin of the soul that has merely heard Christ's words; for he only who uttered them knows how "great is the fall of it."*

* In the sixth chapter of the Gospel by Luke, occurs a passage so similar to the sermon on the mount, that some have supposed the evangelist intended to record the same discourse as Matthew has given. But Luke expressly declares that he has handed down to us a discourse delivered. not on a mount, but "when Christ was come down and stood in the plain," and after the calling of the twelve Apostles, a period later than this which Matthew assigns to the sermon on the mount. Luke's record contains only thirty verses; Matthew's more than a hundred. Nor can the shorter be considered a mere abridgment, for it contains many additional expressions and three woes which Matthew has not recorded. What is called the Lord's prayer is not given by Luke here, but in another place. We must therefore conclude that our Lord deemed the outlines of his doctrine so important, that he delivered an abridgment of them on another occasion. I would, therefore, recommend the reader to turn to the sixth of Luke, and carefully note the coincidences, the differences, and the additions.

LECTURE VIII.

SERMON AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

JOHN v. 17-47.

That the promised Messiah would be at once "the rock of salvation," on which the Church is built, and "a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence," was expressly foretold by Isaiah, in a prophecy, of which Peter is the infallible interpreter. When, therefore, the Saviour wrought a most striking cure on a man, who had been diseased thirty-eight years, and had lain for a long time, in vain, at a miraculous pool; the Jews stumbled at the splendid and beneficent miracle. because it was wrought on the sabbath. At Christ's defence they stumble the more; for the Prophet had said, that, when they once began to reel, they would stagger on, unable to recover themselves, and would be "broken, and snared, and taken." For Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" so that, "They sought the more to kill him; because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said, that God was his own, or proper, Father,* making himself equal with God." They well knew there was a sense in which any good man might lawfully call himself a child, or son of God, and God his Father, as is manifest by their own words, "We have one Father, even God." But they knew, also, another application of the phrase, Son of God, which implied Divinity, as when Jehovah says to Messiah, "Thou art my Son, and thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." When, therefore, Christ defended his miracle, though wrought on the sabbath, by saying, " My Father, who rested on the sabbath from the works of creation, works to this hour in the support

^{*} Πατέρα ίδιον, and verse 18.

and government of the world; and thus I work;" the Jews understood him to claim the prerogatives of that Son whom the Church was commanded to worship as divine.* Thus commenced an address to the heads of the Jewish church, in the hall of the Sanhedrim, as Doddridge supposes; but I imagine, in the court of the temple, where Christ found the man whom he had healed the preceding day. Uncertain of its date, I had placed it before the Sermon on the Mount; but now I incline to think it should come after that discourse. We have here—the harmony between the operations of the Father and the Son—the works specially assigned to the Son—and the testimonies that are given to his mission.

I. The harmony between the operations of the Father and the Son.

To show that he was not uttering the hasty, angry breath of contradiction, the Saviour repeats a solemn asseveration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." As it is said, God cannot lie, with the Father, Christ has such a union that he cannot act separately. Whether this refers to what is called the order of operation following the order of the persons in the Trinity, so that the Father is first and the Son next; or whether it expresses the order which Christ, as mediator, observed, in following the Father as an obedient servant, I pretend not to decide. It teaches, however, that the conduct of the Son was always so perfectly in unison with the Father, that the former could no more do wrong than the Father.

This claim to impeccability was followed by an assertion of omnipotence. "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise;" or, to avoid the appearance of tautology in the words also and likewise, we may for the latter word substitute "equally," which is a faithful translation of the Greek.† But, when Christ says, "Whatever the Father does, I do; and just as the Father does," he makes the most direct claim to Deity. For is it not by "the

things that are made, that eternal power and Godhead are known?"

But the works which the Father does, to prove his existence and attributes; these, also, the Son does; whether it be creating from nothing, or varying the forms and natures of beings, or producing new individuals, of species already existing, or supporting and controlling all creation. For, if Jesus did not these works, just as the Father does them, how easily could the Jews have appealed to them, as the exclusive operations of the Father, and said, "How couldst thou assert that whatever the Father does, thou doest equally, or in like manner?" Would our Saviour have made this assertion, if he had been conscious, that to all the peculiar works of the Father, he had no claim at all; and that in what he wrought, in any sense, there was that infinite distance between his acts and those of the Father, which must ever subsist between the God who worketh all in all, by his own attributes and volitions, and the subordinate actions of a mere creature, an instrument, who, in effect, is but the tool by which the real agent works?

But as these lofty words were uttered by human lips, it is evident that the speaker must have some inferiority, or subordination; at least, as to that humanity, which the Father never assumed. Our Saviour, therefore, proceeds to account for his using such language, while "found in fashion as a man," by saying, "the Father loveth the Son, and though he is now in an inferior nature, shows him, in that nature, all things that himself doeth." What a view this gives of Jesus Christ glancing through the universe, and seeing all the works of Deity! The wisest of mere men, said, "Thou knowest not the works of God, who worketh all."* In fact, we are so far from seeing all things that God does, in the whole range of created existence, that we see but a small part of his operation in the meanest things beneath our eye. Who can see all that Deity is operating in the heart of a fly, or the flower of the moss, or the blade of grass? Jesus Christ, however, could dart his eye through the universe, and look into all that his Father was doing, in the heaven of heavens, among an gelic beings, in the starry worlds; in the animal, vegetable, or mineral kingdoms, or in the breasts of men.

Jesus says, "the Father will show him greater works than these, which have already surprised you, that ye may marvel" still more. What are these works, greater and more wondrous than the healing of the man at the pool? By what follows, Christ seems to hint at the intended resurrection of the young man of Nain and of Lazarus; but I suspect that he alludes, also, to raising himself from the dead, which was the grand miracle, most astounding to the Jews. There is no work more characteristic of the Almighty, than giving life to dead matter. We are all conscious, that, whatever mighty works men boast, whatever monuments of their strength and skill, they may rear, the whole world of us could not give life to a worm. But, when the Father raises up and puts life into the dead, we exclaim, "This is the finger of God!" An inspired writer describes God, as "he who quickeneth the dead;" for "unto God the Lord, belong the issues from death." The "Son of God then, quickeneth whom he will." The living tread on the ashes of the dead. See the Son of God walking with the footsteps of a man, over the once animated dust of former generations, and feeling in himself that it was at his discretion to raise any of them, or to call the whole defunct world back again to life. Of this he gave sufficient specimens. Unless this was by a power truly divine, like that of the Father, and by sovereign pleasure, as supreme lord of life, this speech was an empty boast. For any mere creature could do all this, as an instrument working according to the will of Deity.

II. The operations peculiar to the Son.

These are the greatest which the mind of man can contemplate—the general judgment—the moral or spiritual resurrection of the soul—and the final resuscitation of the body.

The first of Christ's peculiar works is the general judgment.

"For the Father judgeth no man"—an arrangement which seems to have been made, because, on the one hand, the Father is invisible; and, on the other, it was desirable that the arraigned world should see its judge.

This was adduced by the Saviour as another proof of his deity. For, not merely overt acts, but "the secrets of all hearts shall be judged in that day;" and "God, the judge of all, alone knoweth the hearts of all men." All judgment is committed to Jesus Christ, "that all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." There is so natural and irresistible a conviction on the spirits of men, that "God is judge himself," that, whatever opinion of Christ's mere humanity men may carry through life and through death; they will not be able to maintain it at the judgment seat. But lest we should there find that we are foolishly wise, by being wise too late, let us now "honour the Son, even as we honour the Father."

If we believe the Son to be a true witness of the Father's will, we must conclude that we best consult his interests, by honouring the Son, even as we honour the Father.

Perhaps the Saviour now saw, that the mention of the judgment had awakened in the breasts of his more humble and pious hearers, awful solicitudes concerning their own appearance at his bar. Their trembling fear lest they should not have paid due honour to their judge, he met with his characteristic grace, by the consoling doctrine of justification by faith. "Verily he that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." v. 24.

The second of the peculiar works of the Son, is the spiritual resurrection of dead souls: v. 25, 26.

Christ had just before spoken of a mental resurrection, experienced by believers who "pass from death to life;" and he afterwards adduces his power to raise the body, in proof of this resurrection being under his control. As he would not make the thing a proof of itself, we must conclude that he speaks here of the spiritual resurrection from the death in sin. Of this he says, "The hour is coming, and now is, when

the dead shall hear my voice," which cannot refer to the resurrection at the last day, of which he afterwards says only, "The hour is coming." May we not suppose that his heart-searching eye now saw his word sinking into the souls of some of his hearers, who had hitherto been dead in sins? He had said to the dead souls, "Awake, thou that sleepest!" and he saw some wake up to "the life of God." For if none but the voice of God can cause those to hear who are literally dead, is this less true of the spiritually dead, who are farther from spiritual life than dead bodies from natural life? If, at any time the sound of the preacher's word seems to produce divine life in sinners, it is because "the Lord worketh with us." But Jesus here declares that "the dead shall hear his voice, and they that hear shall live," more glorious monuments of divine power than the rising dead at the last day; in proportion as souls are more exquisite works of Deity than bodies.

For "as the Father has life in himself," or his own substance, or essence, as the Syriac renders it; "even so has he given to the Son to have life in himself." All mere creatures have their natural life, not in themselves, but in another; for they are mere channels into which life flows from the living God, whom we are taught to adore, saying, "With thee is the fountain of life." But the Son of God becoming flesh, it required the consent of the other Divine Persons that life should dwell in such a one as its fountain. It pleased the Father, then, that "in him should all fulness dwell."

Now, the Saviour utters what may seem a repetition of his former assertion, "That all judgment is committed to him." Our Lord might choose thus to teach us, that there is a congruity between his power to quicken the dead in sins, and his authority to judge men for their sins. In this view of the judgment, we see why he should assign this reason, "because he is the Son of man." For, as it is fit that he who humbled himself to the lowest degree, by taking upon him the form of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, should be exalted to the highest style of deity, by sitting as judge of the world; so it will vindicate the ways

of God, since none will charge with undue severity the sentence pronounced by him, who, from love to man, became one of us.

But, if Christ were merely "a Son of man," this reason could not be assigned for his becoming judge, without making it equally fit that either of us should be exalted to that office; since we also can say, "I am the Son of man." The Saviour, therefore, evidently speaks of himself as having two natures, as Son of God, and Son of man. His Deity qualified him to search hearts; his humanity rendered him visible; and the merit of his redeeming work made him worthy of this honour.

Yet as the judgment had been mentioned before, I am inclined to think that the Greek word κρίσις is here used in its other sense, of discrimination. Jesus, therefore, may be understood to say, " He that has the life-giving voice which can awaken a dead soul, has also authority to use discrimination, and guicken whom he pleases." For to whom should the destinies of men be trusted, but to him who, for their salvation, became the Son of man? He said, therefore, to his disciples, "I know whom I have chosen;" for "it is not you who have chosen me, but I who have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bear fruit."

The third of the peculiar works of the Son of God, is the raising of the dead bodies of men at the last day. " Marvel

not at this:" v. 28, 29.

"The hour is coming." Yes, it is coming, as fast as time can move. In that appointed hour, all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of Christ, and the sound uttered from the lips of one who is a man, shall make all that were slumbering in their tombs start up from the long sleep of death. It is probable that the graves, or monuments rather, are mentioned here for two reasons; first, to show that Christ refers to a literal resurrection, and then to teach us the identity of the body that shall rise; for if it is not to be a genuine resurrection of the same body, why raise it from the tomb in which our former body was interred? A new body might as well be made from dust taken anywhere else.

The same body shall be joined to the same soul, to suffer or enjoy with it. Hitherto, the tomb, like the lion's den, has exhibited the marks of no footsteps but those which were turned towards it, and marched in; for none come forth thence. But the hour is coming when the scene shall be reversed, and this devouring den shall be called upon to disgorge at once all that it has swallowed up for ages. Such power has the voice of the Son of God! The busy hum of men upon this earth, or the loud thunder's blast, disturbs not the silence of the tomb. But when Jesus Christ shall descend and say, "Rise, ye dead! the hour of slumber is past! the judgment is come!" all shall wake, with this sound vibrating on their ears. None shall be able to slumber on, when the hour of waking is come. They that were deaf as the adder, before they died, shall be all ear to the voice of Christ.

The dead going forth to the grave is a melancholy spectacle; and to let down into the tomb the body once dear to us, is almost death to survivors. There is, however, an hour coming, which will be more horrifying to many, when we shall see all the dead coming forth, earth heaving and sending up her living contents, generation after generation returning all alive, from that man whose first sin brought death into the world, down to the last that died.

But the multitude shall be divided. "They that have done good shall come forth to the resurrection to life." By nature, "there is none that doeth good;" but we are "created anew unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them?" Such shall come forth to the resurrection to life; for the body itself shall be like the eye, all life, and be endued with vivacity that will last to eternal ages; while the soul shall drink large draughts from "the pure river of water of life that flows down from the throne of God and the Lamb." This, and this only, is resurrection to life.

"Those who have done evil, shall come forth to the resurrection to condemnation." Evil we have all done; for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Yet it is not true that all will rise to condemnation; but only those who have done nothing except evil. Let none demur to this, and ask, "Where is the man who has done only evil?" I deny not the difference between one natural man and another; but till we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son, we are "aliens and enemies," whose works cannot be accepted as good. All who die in this state shall rise to damnation. Shall I attempt to describe such a resurrection? To paint a body that comes forth, not to life, but to the second death? To exhibit one rising from the grave of corruption, only to go down to the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death? No; I have no powers for the task. Were we to see one that looked like ourselves, stand and command the dead to rise; and were the earth to heave and send forth all her dead, should we not immediately conclude that the speaker was the living God manifest in flesh? Should we not involuntarily exclaim, "The voice of a God, and not of a man?" For this reason, Jesus adduced this work, to justify his making himself equal with God. Listen to

III. The testimonies which he produces in support of his claims.

These are such as ought to have convinced; for they were sufficient in character and in number.

The first testimony is that of John the Baptist: v. 30—32. There is a difficulty in this passage, which arises, perhaps, from Christ's referring to the thoughts of his hearers, who were secretly accusing him of arrogance, in saying these lofty things of himself. Our Lord replies, "Such is the identity of me and my Father, that I never act of myself, nor speak aught but what I hear him speaking within me. The judgment I pass, or the discrimination I exercise, in raising the souls that were dead to God, or in calling some from the graves, as proofs of my mission, is just; for it is never the result of undue partiality, or of private ends; since 'I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me.'" But when the Saviour says, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true;" some would translate it as a question, "is it not true?" For, in another place, he says, "If

I bear witness of myself, my witness is true." It is, however, most likely, that he here means to say, If I alone witness to myself, it is not sufficient to induce you to receive it as true, or valid. "There is, then, another that beareth witness of me;" and however you may choose to reject it, "I know that his witness is true." "You sent unto John, and he bare witness to the truth." The solemn deputation from the ecclesiastical authorities to inquire of John what he professed to be, and his faithful testimony, we considered in the first Lecture on Christ's life.

The character ascribed to John is beautifully simple and strikingly instructive. He was a light, or lamp, rather; not extinct, but lighted, and burning with a clear and brilliant flame. We have few of John's words recorded; but these amply justify the character here given of his ministry; that it was clear as light, penetrating as fire.

The Jews, who had not seen a prophet among them, for five hundred years, exulted at the first sight of this blazing lamp, not only receiving John as a prophet, but even suspecting that he might prove the desire of all nations. But, alas! it was only "for an hour" that they were willing to rejoice in this light; for when they saw the sanctity of his life, heard his reproofs of their hypocrisy and vice, and found that he bore witness to Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, as the Messiah, they turned round and said of John, "He hath a devil."

Jesus, however, had no need of John's testimony, nor that of any man; for Christ, like his Gospel, is his own witness. Yet there was, in the ministry of the Baptist, such force, that it was eminently conducive to their salvation. These things, therefore, Jesus said, not that he might be honoured, but "that they might be saved."

To the second witness on his behalf, Christ now appeals: John v. 36. "I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

On this subject I forbear to dwell; because the whole course of lectures on the history of Christ, is but a con-

tinued exposition of the works of Christ, and the evidence they afford to his divine mission. They were so numerous and various, that it would be difficult to conceive rationally of any real miracle that was not virtually included in the works of Christ. So admirably were their circumstances ordered, that they presented every evidence of truth that could be demanded. The style of sanctity and benevolence in which they were wrought, was such, that they cannot be charged to Satan, without supposing that he has conspired against his own kingdom, and the agents of hell have agreed to advance the cause of heaven. Such was the union of majesty and humility in these works of Christ; so perfectly did he act, as at once the sovereign lord of the universe, and the humble servant of the Father, that every attentive observer may see the mysterious combination of God and man.

The third witness to Christ is the Father: "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not."

Three times the Father spake, with an audible voice from the skies, to call men to believe on his Son. At Jordan; "on the holy mount;" and in the court of the temple, when the Greeks came to see Jesus, and he said, "Father, glorify thy name;" and there came a voice from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Now the Jews were taught by Moses, on whom they doated, to set the highest value on the audible voice speaking to them from heaven: Deut. iv. 32, 33.

Ask the witness within your own breasts, my dear hearers, whether you would not be bound to receive the evidence of the voice of God, speaking to you from heaven, much more than any human testimony, upon which, however, the life of a fellow creature is often sacrificed.

The following words may be read interrogatively; "have ye never heard his voice, nor seen his shape?" referring to the Father's voice and the descent of the Spirit in bodily

shape, as a dove, at Christ's baptism. But Lampe supposes that Christ means to say, "Though a voice addressed your ears, and a heavenly form was presented to your eyes, ye did not see and hear; for ye have eyes that see not, and ears that hear not;" while John said, "I saw and heard, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

The last witness to which Christ appeals is the sacred Scripture. He commences by declaring, that as they did not regard the extraordinary revelation afforded to bear witness to Christ, so neither had they the ordinary revelation of the written word abiding in their heart, of which this was a proof, that on the Saviour, whom the author of Scripture had sent to them, they did not believe. For, with what eagerness of welcome they who have been previously imbued with the true spirit of the Scriptures embrace Christ when, for the first time, they hear him exhibited in the preaching of the Gospel, or see him reflected in the temper and conduct of an eminent Christian!

But, as an ancient father says, "read the Scriptures; for this is the cause of all evils, ignorance of the Scriptures;" so Christ says, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

The original word may be read either, ye do search, or search ye; and our translation, which is supported by the Syriac,* agrees well both with the position of the original sentence, and the scope of the passage.† But what a proof

* ميت with which agrees the Arabic اوتستوا

† But our translation in the imperative form is generally adopted, because it is supposed that this is always the sense where such a doubtful word stands, as here at the commencement of the sentence. Yet James iv. 2, 3, and other instances, might be adduced of the indicative sense, which would give great force to our Lord's argument here: "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life, and these are they that testify of me, and yet ye will not come to me that ye may have life." The argument for searching the Scriptures is equally forcible, as if we took the word $\epsilon \rho \epsilon \nu \nu \hat{a} \tau \epsilon$ in the imperative. Campbell argues well for the indicative. Martini gives the following version, "Voi andate investigando le scritture perchè credete di avere in esse la vita eterna; e queste sono quelle che parlano a favor mio; et non volete

of sincerity and truth our Lord here gave, in sending them to the Scriptures, for evidence in his favour! For when a person who works miracles, like Jesus, submits to be tried by the common standard of divine revelation by which we must all be judged, it is manifest that he is far from designing to dazzle and confound us by the splendour of his works, is conscious that his pretensions can bear to be investigated by the calm and sober light of the ancient word. Can they be the genuine ministers of this Saviour, who proudly disdain to be tried by this standard, and say to us, "Search not the Scriptures?"

When Christ says, "Ye think ye have eternal life in the Scriptures," it sounds to us as if he meant that it was merely their opinion. This, however, was not his meaning. We should more correctly read thus, "Ye yourselves think you have eternal life in the Scriptures." What an eulogium on this holy book! With what diligence should we search that volume that contains the revelation, the promise, and the means of eternal life! Instead of skimming over it lightly, by mere formal reading, as the Jews did, imitating the swallow that merely dips the tip of its wings in the water, while it hunts the flies on its surface; we should dig, as the miner does, into the bowels of the earth in search of hidden treasures. The Jews, however, were not willing to come to Christ that they might have life, preferring their external rites, their fancied righteousness, and their false and carnal expectations of a worldly Christ.

The contest between the Preacher and his audience now grew warm. They looked disdainfully, and said in their hearts, "Come to thee for life! No, indeed; never!" "Well," said the Saviour, "I receive not glory from men, though they may receive life and glory from me. I, like the sun, give light and lustre to all, but receive from none. But

venir a me per aver vita." 'Ye go searching the Scriptures, because you believe you have in them eternal life, and these are they that speak in my favour, and ye will not come to me to have life.' De Sacy also concurs in this rendering, "yous lisez avec soin," 'you carefully read.'

I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you; it is, therefore, no dishonour to me that you will not come to me; for what is the value of their love who love not God?" What a sentence from the lips of the Son of God, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men!

The same destitution of the love of God which made the Jews reject the lowly Saviour, who, while exercising the powers of Deity, referred all to the Father's honour, induced them to embrace proud pretenders to Messiahship, who boasted what wondrous persons they were. The sin of the Jews became their punishment and their ruin!

"Hear the eternal mandate of the skies:

He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies."

During the reign of Hadrian; a cruel robber, because his name was Barcochebas, the son of a star, persuaded the Jews that he was a star come from heaven to give them light. They went after him, and perished in their own delusions.

Yet "how can ye believe," says the Saviour, "who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" For the man who flatters those who will flatter him, and feels not his obligation to receive truth, as coming from its only fountain, is of a temper that renders it as unreasonable to expect him to believe in Christ as it is to look for figs from thorns.

Now, lest they should think he was venting the bitterness gendered by their opposition, Jesus said, "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father;" for I came to save, and will, at last, come again to judge, not to accuse. Nor is there any occasion; for "there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you repose your hopes." But how must they have been astounded, when they heard that Moses was accusing them before God; and that, for not believing his writings! Of nothing were they more sure than that they believed the Mosaic writings; and, indeed, as far as they understood them, there can be no doubt that they did. But of the true import and spirit and design of Moses, they were awfully ignorant; he had a veil over his face, and they could

not see the end of that dispensation, which is now abolished; and how can a man believe that which he does not know? Let us tremble lest the Christian, as well as the Jewish penmen of the Scriptures, should be accusing us before God for not believing their writings, while yet we spurn the name of deist.

If any ask, does not Christ exalt Moses above himself by saying, "If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" we reply, "he reminds the Jews that of him, who was now speaking to them, Moses wrote." There is in the writings of Moses a stamp of divinity which appeals to the spiritual discernment of men, and demands the faith of all who can believe when God speaks; and there was in Christ's words the same evidence which appealed to the same moral sense. If, therefore, they, under the influence of a depraved aversion, rejected whatever God said to them by Moses, no wonder they rejected Christ. With a less imposing exterior, Jesus brought a more spiritual dispensation of religion; so that if even the writings of Moses were too heavenly for their comprehension, and too pure for their belief, how much more our Saviour's words!

By all the glories of that moment, when Christ shall raise the bodies, both of the righteous and wicked; by all the terrors of the final judgment; by all the mighty grace that now quickens the dead in sins; by all the horrors of the guilty conflict which the Jews maintained against the ministry of Jesus; I beseech my hearers to bow to his voice, and receive the testimony of Moses and the Prophets and Apostles, to him who will, at last, call us from our tombs, to receive our final sentence at his bar.

LECTURE IX.

CHRIST UPBRAIDS THE CITIES OF GALILEE, AND REJOICES
OVER THE ELECT.

Matt. xi. 20-30. Luke x. 13-15.

"In the day of prosperity be joyful," says the wise man; "but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him."* This balancing of good and evil, in the present life, is a profitable theme of reflection; for it teaches us to rejoice with trembling, when prosperity might otherwise render us giddy; "and in patience to possess our souls," when adversity would plunge us into despair. But where is this succession of good and evil, joy and sorrow, to be seen so strikingly, as in the history of our Lord? Who sunk so low, under the pressure of the bitter consequences of sin, as the man of sorrows? Who rose so high as he, "who is gone into heaven, angels, and principalities, and powers, being made subject to him?" Of this strange succession of events, this complete transition from one extreme to the other, there were many anticipations; but none more impressive than that which is here exhibited; for Christ, in almost the same breath, upbraids such as rejected his ministry, and exults over those who were given him to be the reward of "the travail of his soul that he might be satisfied." To these upbraidings, and these rejoicings, our attention is now to be directed.

I. The upbraidings poured over those who rejected Christ's ministry, are a dark cloud, from which issue portentous flashes. But, who could have expected, that, when the

^{*} Eccles, vii. 14.

Gospel "began to be preached by the Lord himself," and was confirmed by mighty signs and wonders, this should be the result—woe, woe, woe? "Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in great waters; thy footsteps are not known." "Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

1. Behold those that were exalted to heaven by privileges. These were three cities of Galilee; Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, standing around the lake of Genesareth. The latter city being on an eminence, was physically exalted; but much more, morally and spiritually, when Jesus, quitting Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and where his life had been attempted, took up his abode at Capernaum, which was henceforth called his own city; as we call that city in which we live, ours, though we may have been born or brought up in some other place. These three towns, our Lord filled with his miraculous works, some of which are recorded in the Gospel. His miracles, contrary to his usual practice, he exalts as "mighty works." But what were the effects produced? The rich man in hell said, "I pray thee, father Abraham, send Lazarus to my Father's house; for, if one went to them from the dead, they will repent." No; said the father of the faithful; "if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead." See this confirmed. The cities of Galilee beheld what was as striking and impressive as the sight of one raised from the dead. Nay, the dead actually were raised to life, by the voice of Christ: but they who saw, repented not. These mighty works were no dumb signs, of which they knew not the meaning. Miracles were made vocal by Christ's preaching, which was most instructive and eloquent; so that the ear aided the eye, and through the understanding, the signs addressed the heart. What people ever enjoyed such privileges? To see Jesus in their streets; to behold him controlling the course of nature with a touch; to hear him speak, as never man spake; to have all physical means addressed to their senses; all intellectual methods employed on their minds; in the highest perfection! But, behold the result: "they repented not." The great mass of those who enjoyed such privileges remained impenitent; for the exceptions were rare, serving but to confirm the rule.

What were the cities thus exalted to heaven? Not Rome, that called herself the eternal city, the mistress of the world; for the Lord of all worlds did not visit her in human form, to display the greatest of all works there. Nor was the favoured city, Alexandria, the emporium of commerce; nor Antioch, the seat of luxury; nor Ephesus, or Corinth, the abode of the arts; nor Athens, the eye of Greece; nor even Jerusalem, the holy city, the chosen site of Divine worship. Three obscure fishing towns of Galilee "God chose, as the weak things of this world, to confound the mighty." But look again at these cities,

- 2. See them cast down to hell, for their abuse of privileges.
- "Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida; and thou, Capernaum, that art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell." For these words exhibit the three favoured towns, as sunken lower in guilt and ruin, than those that had hitherto been thought most guilty and most wretched.
- They were more obdurate than those that were proverbial for wickedness-Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah. "For if the mighty works that have been done here, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes." Tyre and Sidon were heathen cities, not far from where Christ stood, and like other such places, were corrupted by their very religion, and filled with the abominations of idols. But as Nineveh, though a heathen city, repented at the preaching of Jonah, Christ affirmed that Tyre and Sidon would have done so too, if they had seen such miracles as he had wrought in the cities which he upbraided. As for Sodom, it was proverbial for wickedness; and shameless sinners are said to "declare their sin as Sodom," which despised the warnings of Lot, and thus was left to the fearful overthrow that gave rise to the far-famed dismal lake, that Christ now perhaps had within view. But

even Sodom "would have remained to this day," says our Lord; "if it had seen the mighty works that I have wrought in Capernaum." This is one of the most difficult passages of Scripture; for some would, from thence, argue that divine influence is not necessary to produce repentance, which would have followed, in certain cases, from external means, such as the sight of splendid miracles. But it may be said, in reply, that the repentance of Nineveh, is mentioned by our Lord, in the same way, and we have no reason to think that this was repentance to life, any more than Ahab's humiliation; but that it was external, moral reformation, which may save a city from being destroyed by fire from heaven, as our Lord speaks of Sodom, remaining to this day. If any say, of what use, then, is that external change which could not save the soul from death? we answer; it would have saved them from that terrible destruction which overtook Sodom; and is it nothing to be rescued from such a doom, from being made monuments of Divine wrath and burnt up with fire from heaven? Is it nothing to be spared, and to have further space given for repentance? If any, however, still think that true repentance should be understood; then we observe, that this would not prove that mere external means, like miracles, would produce repentance; for the words of Christ may thus merely show, that God would not have given such means to Tyre and Sidon, and Sodom, without giving his Holy Spirit with them, to make them productive of repentance unto eternal life.

But we may be asked, why turn this way and that, as if to support an hypothesis? Because the Scriptures have declared that repentance is the gift of God; that it is when the Spirit of grace and supplication is shed forth, that we look at him whom we have pierced and mourn; and we ought not to suffer a single text, like this, introduced with another design, to overthrow the faith which is founded on a whole host of Scriptures, some of which were given us expressly to teach the depravity of man, the dead level on which we are all placed by nature, and the absolute necessity of the influences

of the Holy Spirit to produce every thing good, and especially repentance towards God.

If, again, some should say, why did not God grant such means to such cities as Sodom and Gomorrah, that they might, at least, have repented, so far as to be saved from being burnt alive, and might have died the common death of all men? If they would have improved these miracles, better than Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, why were not Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, favoured with them?" We answer, with the Apostle; "Nay, but who art thou, Oh man, that repliest against God? Who shall say to him, What doest thou?" God saw that some would have improved these privileges better, and did not grant them; he knew that others would pervert these privileges, and yet he saw fit to bestow them; "he giveth no account of these matters;" he owes us none.

But this we learn, that eminent privileges may prove, by our abuse of them, great curses. For here were heathen and wicked cities, Tyre and Sidon, and even Sodom, declared by our Lord, to be less hardened and more impressible, by mighty signs and wonders, than cities professing the worship of the true God, and enjoying the ministry of Christ. We know that great and powerful means, when we become familiar with them, make us insensible. Often do I wish, for my own sake, and for yours, my dear hearers, that I could pour a clearer light of truth over your minds, urge your hearts with stronger persuasions and shake your souls with terrors more awful. And, yet I am half afraid to indulge the wish; for, if not improved, these better means would but leave you more obdurate, and make your salvation a more desperate affair. The tyro that, for the first time, sees the sparks elicited by electricity, starts, surprised and terrified; while the philosopher who is accustomed to the working of the machine, sees the electric fire and hears the crackling noise without emotion.

But who would have looked for the most hardened of men, not in heathen, but in Christian cities? Who would have

expected to find the most obdurate hearts in London, rather than Constantinople; at New York, rather than Canton? How it chills our blood to reflect, that, among Christian assemblies, where Christ is proclaimed, where the preaching is most like his own; there may be found the most awful impenitence, the hardest hearts, the guiltiest souls, the foulest crime—that of rejecting Heaven's best means of grace. Thence it follows, that, in such places, are found those who will be,

2. More wretched than those who were made monuments of Divine wrath.

Tyre and Sidon, maritime commercial cities, on the coast of Judea, have been thought by some, to have been beyond the limits of the country given by God to Israel; for when David pushed his conquests to the utmost lengths, and Solomon was Lord of the ascendant, those cities, under their own kings, were treated in a friendly manner; and, as a reward for contributing timber for the building of the temple, other towns were given to the king of Tyre. But intolerable pride was the offspring of the wealth acquired by that commerce which Ezekiel so magnificently described; and, venturing to oppose, first, Nebuchadnezzar, and next, Alexander, in the midst of their career of conquest, such vengeance was wreaked on the luxurious cities as brought them to the ruin which the Prophet had denounced. A barren rock for fishermen to spread their nets upon, is all that remains of the mistress of the seas, "whose merchants were princes." But, if you walk over the desolation, and ask, "What meaneth the heat of this fierce anger?" a voice from the rock answers, "Think not that these were sinners above all that dwelt on the earth, because they suffered these things; for far heavier woes await thee, O Chorazin, thee, O Bethsaida; not the destruction of a splendid city, thrown into heaps; not crowds of busy inhabitants reduced to the silence of death; but the wreck of souls, the destruction executed at the day of judgment, which shall affright the universe, when every mouth that would utter an excuse shall be stopped, when 'wrath shall

come upon them to the uttermost,' when ' their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched.' "

As for Sodom and Gomorrah, their punishment is well known; for God has "made them an example" to all others, says the Apostle.* "The sun rose on the earth, when Lot went out of Sodom, and the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of heaven; and overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground; and Abraham looked towards Sodom; and, lo, the smoke of the country went up, as the smoke of a furnace." + "Our God is a consuming fire." In the morning, there was a populous city, with its streets of houses, and busy inhabitants, and troops of boys and girls, playing in the streets; in the evening, it is silent as death—a heap of smoking ruins.

But, if, again, you say, "What meaneth the heat of this great anger?" a voice from the ashes of the dead, still hot with vengeful fires, replies, "Thinkest thou that these were sinners, above all that were in the earth? I tell you, nay." There is guilt greater than theirs. They had, indeed, enough to justify the judgment that overtook them; but what is all that fire that consumed bodies and houses, to that which awaits those who despise such a visitor as never walked the streets of Sodom? "Woe to thee, Capernaum, for thou, after being exalted to heaven, by the residence of God dwelling in flesh, shalt be brought down to hell." Judgments await thee, when the Romans invade the land. Yet these shall be but a faint shadow of that which shall overtake those of thine inhabitants who despised the Son of God, when they shall be called to answer for it at the day of judgment. For they shall hear the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The fætid, gloomy lake of Sodom rose over the ruins of the guilty cities, and may be said to have quenched their fires; but the Dead Sea stands an everlasting emblem of the Divine wrath, which shall avenge the despising of the Son of God.

How true, then, is the saying of the wise man; "That no one knoweth love, or hatred, by what is before him!" How true that "God is judge himself," and that we cannot tell who are the greatest sinners, even though judgments may seem to mark them out. Though you saw a man struck with the lightnings of heaven, lying under your feet, reduced to a cinder, you could not tell that he was a sinner above all others. For there might be some walking about alive and well, and even enjoying the highest religious privileges, like the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum, who were yet more guilty than those that were burnt up with fire from heaven. For it is not the particular sins which we commit, that constitute our guilt; it is not the judgments that we may suffer in this life, that form our punishment; but the privileges that we have enjoyed and not improved, the instructions we have received without growing wise; the invitations that we have had and rejected, give the decisive character to our moral turpitude; and our punishment is not that which kills the body, and there ends; but that which seizing the soul, comes upon us in eternity, and lasts for ever.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." As there were in those cities, where the Son of God was walking, preaching, healing, doing mighty and gracious works, men who were burdened with more guilt than those very Sodomites, on whom heaven poured down rivers of fire, which reduced them all to ashes, as in a moment; so may there be more guilt among those who are sitting quietly, hearing the most divine discourses concerning the Redeemer's love, than among those that have been made the mark of God's arrows, and the monuments of his avenging wrath.

But God will, at last, vindicate his judgments, both in their swiftness and slowness; their severity and their lenity. Sodom and Gomorrah, will one day say, "Our judgment is severe, indeed; but it is tolerable, compared with those who heard thee, O Christ, who didst never visit Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah. There is a long eternity to rectify any apparent irregularity of the Divine dispensations; and in the future world, God will show that his ways are equal, that "a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he."

Judgment came, because they repented not. For it is not so much having sinned, as not having repented of sin, that ruins man. Angels, indeed, perished, because they sinned; but to man, though a sinner, mercy is exhibited; yet with this warning, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." We, therefore, have no middle doom to expect; but either the best, or the worst of conditions awaits us. Embrace Christ, and you are exalted to heaven; reject him, and you will be cast down into the lowest hell. "Even in the lowest, a lower still yawns to receive us;" if we have been favoured with the best of all means of bringing us to Christ, and have turned judgment into wormwood, because we despised them and repented not.

II. The thanksgivings which Christ poured into his Father's bosom, are like a bright sun, which bursts out from those dark clouds of wrath, which we have viewed with trembling.

Our Lord having announced wrath and destruction, more terrible than that which Abraham witnessed, and against which he so tenderly interceded, shows that he felt no malignant passion; for, in the same breath, he utters his thanksgivings and rejoicings, telling us,

1. His approbation of his Father's choice.

"Thou hast, indeed, hidden these things from the wise and prudent," those who think themselves so, and are thought so by others, in this world. But true heavenly wisdom is hidden from them; as we see it is from the greater part of those who are renowned as philosophers, skilful as statesmen, and politicians, admired as the poets, literati and geniuses, whom the world crowns with laurels. The Christian who reads their writings, sees, that with all their wisdom and eloquence, they have not, as Augustine said, anything about Christ; and when they treat of subjects that

concern the soul and religion, they speak as blind men of light and colours. "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" There is, here and there, a splendid exception; but one such does not invalidate a rule.

In what sense God may be said to hide from them these things, we may not be able to tell; but we are sure of the fact; both because we read it in this text, and because we see it every day. We may be certain that God is not the author of sin. We may indeed, not have said all that is true, when we have spoken of judicial blindness, to which men are sometimes given up, in punishment for former resistance of the light; or when we have asserted that God is sometimes said to do that which he suffers to be done. The fact, however, rather than the cause or the means, is the object of Christ's contemplation here; and he seems to rejoice in it, " I thank thee that thou hast hidden these things." Nor can there be any rational doubt that the Lord rejoices in his works, since "he has made all things for himself; and for his pleasure they are and were created." The universe, taken as a whole, is the object of God's complacence; for it is better that it should exist, than not exist. Still, however, the idiom should be noticed, that in many Scriptures, where two things are apparently combined, only one of them is included in that assertion which seems to apply to them both. For, when Paul says to the Romans, "God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart the mould of the doctrine into which ye were cast;" he does not thank God that they were once the servants of sin, but that they had now become obedient to righteousness. Christ, therefore, may be here understood to rejoice, that though the things that concern salvation were hidden from the wise and prudent, they were revealed unto babes; that is to say, persons so inferior in human learning and worldly wisdom, that they would be thought mere babes to those who rejected Christ.

That religious persons have generally been poor rather than rich, and illiterate rather than learned, and men of plain sense rather than geniuses, is told with scorn, by the infidel, and sceptic, and irreligious, who think it quite manifest that religion is the consequence of weakness. Thus the "wise are taken in their own craftiness." But now let us turn to the other side of the picture. In the first place, it is undeniable, that there are in babes many things that are preferable to much that is in man. "In malice, be ye children," says the Apostle: " Except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in no case enter therein," says Christ. The simplicity of the dove is preferable to the craft of the serpent. The unsophisticated mind of a child is more favourable to truth and to morals, than the wisdom and prudence acquired by human learning, by the policy of cabinets, and the refinements of courts. In proportion as men grow in true wisdom and exalted piety, they acquire a more child-like spirit, and, instead of priding themselves upon the finesse of the acute politician, they shun the spirit of him that is hacknied in the world's arts. Religion is not an affair of mathematical calculation, or metaphysical abstraction; far less is it a political scheme: it is a moral concern, an affair of the heart and the conscience, which relates to its tempers and duties towards God and man; so that we contend that the temper of the babe is more favourable to a just sense of truth and duty, than the fancied superiority of those whom the world calls wise.

But this is not all. Heavenly wisdom is one of those "good gifts that come from above, descending from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning." Christ, therefore, thanks his Father for revealing these things to babes. If I open my hand, and discover a diamond to a babe, and turning it about, display its sparklings and its beauteous colours, the babe will leap for joy at the sight, while the learned philosopher, from whom I hide it, may be ignorant that there is any such thing to be seen. How foolishly would be argue, if he should contend that it is all a fancy for a babe to suppose that he can see what the greatest philosopher cannot.

But why has God thus hidden from the prudent what he has revealed to babes? Christ says, "Even so, Father, for

so it seemeth good in thy sight." Then we may be sure it is good indeed; for nothing appears so to our Father but what is so in reality, since "God is light, and with him is no darkness at all." We may not be able to tell why it seems so good to him, and to us it may appear any thing but good. Still it is the part of true wisdom not to abide by our own views, which are always limited, and therefore often false, but to prefer the decision of him who sees, at a glance, the whole system of things, and the bearings of each part upon another and upon the whole. We may conclude, that if this appears good to God, there must be some reason for it, as the Fountain of wisdom does nothing without sufficient reason. We, however, may not be able to discover it, as Christ's referring us to God's good pleasure intimates that we cannot. were to be guided by the reason of the thing, would Christ have said, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight?" We may, indeed, conclude that one is illuminated by the revelation from heaven, rather than another, with a view to certain effects and consequences on the whole system of God's government; but we must not suppose that the superior merits of those who have Christ revealed to them procured for them this favour. For why then should not Christ have said, "Even so, Father; for these babes have deserved it, and thou art a rewarder of merit." It will be found, at last, that it was, upon the whole, best to reveal Christ to babes, rather than to the wise and prudent; and we may, even now, see many reasons why we should approve of this arrangement.

Still the question recurs, Why was one man placed in this more favoured class and another in the opposite? But if Christ acquiesced in this decision, and was satisfied that his Father should do as he pleased, should not we share in this satisfaction? Is it not agreeable to a wise and pious mind to see the sovereign Lord do as seems good in his sight? Is there not a high moral beauty in the Author of the universe disposing of it according to his own pleasure? Is he not worthy to have his will in his own way? Can the universe be better disposed of than according to the good plea-

sure of infinite wisdom, undeviating rectitude, and unfailing benevolence? But if Christ rejoiced, and gave thanks for the Father's choice of babes rather than philosophers, let us ask, Are we "like-minded according to Christ Jesus?" Who is not conscious to himself of some opposite feeling, of a secret wish that the wise and prudent, the philosophers and scholars and great men of the world had been chosen, rather than those who were mere babes to them? How much, then, have we yet to attain of the mind of Christ? What reason have we to blush for our worldliness and pride, and to ask that we may "grow in grace," and rise "to the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus?" For "whereunto we have already attained," we may clearly see that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men." It is manifest, even now, that it is better for things to be according to what seems good in God's sight, than to be as the wisdom of this world would have arranged the universe.

But to see the Man of sorrows, for once, rejoicing, is most pleasant. We have so often beheld him in tears, that it is delightful to see him in smiles; and since we know that he well deserves all the joys that he tastes, we should obey his voice, saying, "Rejoice with me." If friends have like pleasures and pains, joys and sorrows, should we be friends of Christ if we did not sympathise with him in the joy of his heart over the objects of his Father's choice? To this was added another cause of sacred exultation.

2. The Saviour's sense of his own dominion. "All things are delivered to me of my Father:" v. 27.

If the wise men of this world reject Christ, do not think that this is a failure in Heaven's plans. No; "All things are delivered into Christ's hands;" for he says, when going to the cross, to be apparently conquered and slain by his enemies, "Thou hast given me power over all flesh."

As God, universal absolute dominion belongs to our Saviour; as mediator, it is the reward of his obedience unto death to be raised from the dead, and to have "all things put

under his feet," and be made "head over all things to the church, which is his body."

Looking at the meanness and the poverty of the speaker, men were shocked to hear him claim the authority of the Lord of the universe; for they said, "We know whence he is." But Christ says, "no one;" for it should not be rendered "no man," "knoweth the Son except the Father." Let those who, with unwarrantable rashness and conceit, affirm that they know him, and that he is a mere man like ourselves, ask whether they do not claim a knowledge of Christ, which he denies to any creature, and claims for the Father only. As for us, we believe that "great is the mystery of godliness; the living God was manifest in the flesh," that "his name is wonderful, or secret, Immanuel, God with us," and that no one but the eternal mind thoroughly knows the person of our Saviour. When, therefore, Peter "witnessed a good confession," "thou art Christ, the Son of the living God;" Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon; for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee, but my Father, who is in heaven."

Nor is it to be overlooked that Christ here assumes the exclusive knowledge of the Father: "No man has seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him. Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son: no man has seen the Father, save he who is of God; he has seen the Father." But happily for us, Christ reveals the Father to whom he pleases. Here, again, sovereign pleasure is said to be the reason why one man has the Father revealed to him rather than another. If Christ had regarded merit as the reason for this distinction, he would have said, the Son reveals the Father to those who deserve it; instead of saying he reveals to whom he pleases.

Would you, then, escape a doom worse than that of Sodom? would you turn the privileges of the Gospel of the grace of God into blessings indeed? Ask from the Father the knowledge of the Son, that all his glories may be poured upon

your mind, all his grace sink into your heart, all his merit justify your souls, all his image be impressed upon your character. Then shall you, though base in the estimation of the world, be wiser than its sages and politicians and philosophers. Ask of the Saviour to reveal the Father to you, saying, with the disciples, "Show us the Father and it suffices us." Then shall you know your God better than the philosopher who studies him among the wonders of the starry world, the magic of chemical transformations, or the abstractions of mental science. Refer all to his sovereign pleasure; for he makes these revelations to whom he pleases; and may not he do what he will with his own? Let not this seem harsh and repulsive; for we have more hope from his good will than from our own. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

LECTURE X.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Matt. xiii. 1-9. Mark iv. 1-9. Luke viii. 4-8.

STRIKING simplicity, which is the highest quality of style, forms the grand characteristic of our Saviour's teaching. But as this is, in a great degree, owing to his admirable use of parables, so these derive their lasting value from their reference to objects of nature, rather than of science, or of art. The inventions of man, being in a continual state of progress, or, at least, of change, often leave the comparisons derived from them involved in obscurity; while nature, being invariable, renders the illustrations drawn from it useful to all nations and every age. Here, our Lord, sitting in the open air, cast his eyes on the scenes around him, and by making his text visible, rendered his instructions palpable. Marking how the seed, which was then, perhaps, being sowed, fell in different kinds of soil, he took this opportunity of warning his hearers of their different characters. For he compares himself to the sower, and his word to the seed, and their hearts to the soil. Seed is the exclusive production of the Divine hand; so are the Scriptures, of the Divine mind; and as the Creator has given to seed a reproductive principle, the Redeemer has consecrated his word to be the instrument of producing true religion. "Ye are born again by the word of truth."

As "God giveth to every seed his own body," wheat producing, only wheat, and thistle seed, nothing but thistles; he has also given to the Divine word, the property of imparting to you thought for thought, affection for affection, spirit for spirit. But this supposes a correspondent state of heart, fitted for the word, as the soil for the seed; and to teach this

important truth, is the grand design of the parable before us. I shall confine my attention, therefore, to the different kinds of hearers, which are four, three of them barren, and only one fruitful. The parable being afterwards explained by the infallible Teacher himself, I shall avail myself of his subsequent interpretation, under each class.

The First kind of hearers are those, who are compared to the way side, whom I will call the thoughtless hearers.

You may have often seen a footpath running across an arable field; which having been ploughed up, the path was soon beaten down hard again, by the footsteps of the passengers; and when the field was sown, the grains that fell on the path, not sinking into the soil, were quickly picked up and devoured by the birds. But now I almost repent of calling those, whom our Lord here describes, the thoughtless hearers; for what sort of hearers are they who do not hear? and such are these now exhibited to view, who have, for years, been within the sound of the Gospel, and have attended many thousands of sermons, but have never yet heard one. Because crowds of vain, worldly thoughts are continually passing to and fro, till their minds are beaten as hard as a footpath; and nothing sinks into them. As fast as anything instructive and impressive drops from the preacher, some vagrant thought comes, and, stamping upon it, crushes it to atoms; or, some volatile start carries off the precious seed of truth, as the winged inhabitants of the air fly off with the grain. Beware, "lest thou mourn at last," and say, "how have I hated instruction; and cast thy words behind my back. I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and the assembly." Thus it is that we see "the wicked buried, who had come and gone to the place of the holy." Our Lord says, they understand not the word; for this listless spirit, breaking the chain of a discourse, precludes all intelligent hearing.

Are you aware that an enemy is doing this? "Then cometh the devil," says our Lord, "and taketh away the word out of their hearts." Ah, there is much of the devil in it. To keep the word from sinking into your hearts, he will remind

you of something you forgot yesterday; or, set you forming some schemes for to-morrow. Now, he will fix your attention on a peculiarity in the preacher's style, or voice, or manner; and then, he will attract notice to the persons, or dress of the hearers; in fact, make you think of any thing, or every thing, but the word preached, "lest you should believe it, and be saved." For, he knows, that "faith cometh by hearing," and "how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" And how can they be said to hear, who are thinking of something else? But why will you become a party with your destroyer, against your Saviour? If to defeat your salvation, and accomplish your destruction, is Satan's object; is it yours also? Though he would triumph in your destruction, what triumphs would you enjoy? "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." But he conceals from you this important truth, that, though you may not actually oppose and contradict the word, your ruin may be as effectually accomplished by mere carelessness; "for how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Have you not heard that the glory of the British navy was lost, not by the thunderbolts of war, or the sword of the enemy, not by storms that stirred up ocean from its deepest bed; but by negligence, leaving open the port-holes, by which the waters rushed in, and carried her down, with hundreds, to the caverns of the deep? By that "fools' eye that wandereth to the ends of the earth;" by that vacant stare; that restless mind, that is fixed on nothing; the enemy is let in, and the life-giving word rendered vain. Often am I tempted to wish that I might violate what are called the decencies of public worship, and coming down from the pulpit, might ask each hearer, what are you thinking about? Oh, if we could extort an answer, loud enough to be heard by the whole congregation, what a rabble of thoughts would be displayed, like the confusion of tongues at Babel!

But, alas! the very nature of this evil renders it almost inaccessible to the means of cure. Yet, something may be done for prevention. Parents, you might save your children from this sin, into which they are otherwise almost sure to fall; if you would form the constant habit of questioning them, on their return from public worship, and rewarding those who show that they have been attentive. Let the necessity for doing something to oppose a most destructive plague, be the preacher's apology for things that might sometimes be thought strange, harsh, and scarcely in good taste; especially for bold strokes, that rouse and startle men; and for anecdotes in preaching; since these are the things that are found to interest the careless, and engage, at least for a moment, the attention of the inattentive.

The Second kind of hearers, are those who are compared to the rocky soil, and whom I shall call the fichle.

The soil of Judea was rocky, so that there was often but a thin layer of earth, before the roots of vegetables came to the stone. In our own country, we sometimes see, where a Roman road has passed through a field, that it has left a stony character on that part, by which the seed is affected. To such spots, our Redeemer compares those hearers who receive the word, at first, with joy, but soon fall away and produce no lasting fruit. It is this strange contrast between their earliest and their latest treatment of the word, which has induced me to call these hearers fickle; though the rocky soil would seem rather to signify those that might be called hardened. But on the surface of the rock there is a layer of earth, into which the seed falls, and where it so quickly germinates, that the Saviour speaks of it, as springing up that very night. These men were, therefore, so promising and hopeful, that we wonder what fault can be found with them. They receive the word with joy, and is not the Gospel glad tidings of great joy? If men do not receive it with delight, at first, while it is new and striking, is there not reason to fear they never will? Enraptured with it, they exclaim, How clear! how true! how convincing! how delightful! we never heard any thing like this; we will attend to such preaching as long as we live. One inexperienced in these affairs would suppose that such persons were converted by the word. But the soil which produces effects so sudden, is shallow, and these loud noisy professions of joy, remind us

of the murmurs of the mere brook that rattles over the stones, or of the hollow reverberation we create when we strike an empty vessel. The very confident resolution of these hearers, shows that they do not know their own hearts; which, if truly broken, would drive them into solitude, to vent their emotions there, in sighs and tears, before God, rather than exclamations and professions before men. Sudden joys may spring from mere love of novelty, from admiration of the manner of the preacher, or from compliments paid to our own penetration and piety, that receive the word with so much

promptitude.

"These believe, only for a while." Believe! Are we not, then, said to be saved by grace through faith, or believing? True; but it is also said, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and "these have no root in themselves," their faith is all on the surface. They believed all they knew of the word; but that was the mere external form of the theory; for the essence of the thing, the true import of the Divine testimony, they did not penetrate, and therefore did not believe. Thus, as the grain sown in the shallow soil, on the surface of the rock, sprang up in the night, but as soon as the sun rose, with its scorching heat, having no depth of earth, and no root, it withered away, like Jonah's gourd, that grew up in the morning, and was blasted ere noon; so the want of perseverance in these fickle hearers, betrays their destitution of a living faith. "We," says the Apostle, to believers, "are not of them that draw back to perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Afflictions, or persecutions, that arise on account of the word, will prove how firmly a believer is rooted; but will make these fickle hearers re-think their thoughts, and repent of their resolutions, and recall their professions. They will say, in their hearts, "I did not think I should have to suffer the loss of my friends, and the forfeiture of their patronage, and the scorn of the world, and the danger of poverty. Surely we may be saved, without such sacrifices; and though I should like to follow this Gospel, there is no occasion to break with all the world, for the sake of an opinion." Then, "bye and bye, they are offended." The novelty having vanished, and their ardour cooled down, they detect some fault in the preacher, or his discourse, or his hearers; for it will never be difficult to find a specious reason for that apostacy to which the heart is inclined. Those who, at first, "wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of Christ's mouth," were quickly "filled with wrath," at his fidelity; and the crowds that, one day, cried "Hosanna," the next, vociferated "Crucify."

But, why this sudden transition, from being delighted to being offended; from the springing up of the seed to its withering away? The heart was still a rock; and it was only on the surface that its apparent goodness lay, producing a momentary pleasure, without any deep heartfelt change; and we could as soon gather a crop of corn from a block of marble, as fruits of salvation from a heart of stone. How many of the joyous hearers of the Gospel are merely like the stones in summer, which are said to give, and by their dampness, would lead you to suppose they were melted! If such hearers should be gathered into a church, while the hot fit is upon them, what scandals would they afterwards bring on the cause of religion, by their fickleness and their return to the world!

The Third sort of hearers are compared to the thorny ground, and may be called the worldly, or covetous class. In the cleanest field, there will be some spots under the hedges, where thorns and weeds abound, and choke the seed that falls there. By this, our divine Instructor describes a farther step of advancement; for the first sort of hearers never paid attention enough to what was said, even to receive it into their minds, at all; the second went farther, and immediately received it eagerly, yet as soon changed their minds; but these last may keep up a profession, for life; as the corn among the thorns may remain till the harvest, but, choked by weeds, will be found to have no full ears.

These thorns are said, by Christ, to mean cares, riches, and pleasures. Cares which choke the word, are not those of necessary prudence, and industry, to provide things need-

ful for the body, by the discharge of the duties of our calling. There is no necessary opposition between our earthly duties, and the salvation of our souls; since we are charged to be "not slothful in business, while fervent in spirit serving the Lord." But the choking cares are those which spring, on the one hand, from unbelief, as if there were no providence of God towards his people; and, on the other, from covetousness, eagerly grasping at more business than men can properly perform, and venturing upon unsafe speculations, "making haste to be rich." These cares so choke the word that they leave no time, and no heart, for the reading of the Bible, for secret prayer, or, at last, for the hearing of the word, and the sanctification of the sabbath.

Then come riches, and prove choking thorns. Riches thorns! some exclaim; are they not roses? I answer, "Roses might grow on these thorns; and make the desert smile, and cheer the drooping heart with their fragrance, as an Apostle's afflicted spirit revived, when he said, 'I have received the things that were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell; a sacrifice well pleasing to God.'"

But, with money, comes the love of money; and "this is the root of all evil;" so that Christ says, "the deceitfulness of riches chokes the word." In fact, they are deceitful enough to make most rich men fancy they are not rich, that they have not enough; for enough is shrewdly said to be a little more than a man has. When, however, riches have gone so far, that it is no longer possible to deny them, the rich usually take another turn, and feed their pride with the continual thought, how rich, and therefore how important they are, and what a right they have to indulge in every luxury, and to exact honiage from all others. But, there is no way in which riches act the deceiver more effectually, than by making men fancy that they are not under obligations to give, rather than to save; that they are not bound to listen to the charge, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth;" but that it is quite innocent to be continually accumulating and thus burying their Lord's talent in the earth. Where

this spirit takes possession of the heart, the word is choked, and can produce no good fruit; for "no covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God." Rich men, indeed, soon turn away from the faithful administration of the word that would counteract the evil tendency of their wealth; and the close carriage quits the Gospel.

Pleasures are the third sort of thorns which our Lord specifies. Are pleasures thorns too? it is asked; what, then, can be the roses? But, ah! how many have found that pleasures have pierced them through with thorns! "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," is the finishing stroke of an inspired description of the wicked. Riches are often pursued, for the sake of the indulgence they afford. The charm of what is called polite society, and "the purple and fine linen, the faring sumptuously every day," the continual round of parties and entertainments, hold the soul in a state of moral intoxication, as fatal as the effects of ardent spirits, on the body. Is this being "crucified to the world?" Is this "taking up the cross and following the man of sorrows?" Is this "striving to enter in at the strait gate," and pursuing the narrow way, which few are happy enough to find? I have known the most hopeful impressions of the word quenched by company and pleasure taking. For, where the word is fruitful, the life of the Christian is an imitation of his Lord, who made it "his meat to do his Father's will," and deferred his rest and reward, to the hour when he sat down at his Father's side. Oh, "let this saying sink down into your ears;" that many who are living in a profession of religion, under the sound of the Gospel, are by these undue cares and anxieties about the world, these riches, that are not faithfully improved, these pleasures that are sought and indulged in, as the business and charm of life, rendered barren, so that, instead of faith, and love, and devotion, and zeal, and mortification to the world, and heavenly-mindedness, which are the proper fruits of the Gospel, a mere empty profession presents itself, like the worthless ears which stand on those stalks that are choked by the thorns. Thus have we seen three out of four of our hearers, as the farmer sees the grains that are spoiled by the smut, or choked by the thorns.

The FOURTH, and last sort of hearers, are compared to the good and fertile ground: we may call them the fruitful hearers. How delightful, after wading through three classes, that all differ from each other; but are all wrong; and hearing, at each step, the repetition of the same ominous sound, barrenness, barrenness, barrenness; to come, at last, to a class that present an oasis in the desert, an island of verdure. amidst an ocean of sand! These are they, "who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." An honest and good heart! Are we not assured that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked?" Yet; does not the same infallible witness say, "A new heart will I give you?" and where he fulfils this promise, "a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good things." When, therefore, the Spirit of God renews the heart, a "man of understanding is of an excellent spirit," the word is received according to its true import, by the enlightened mind, and welcomed with deserved affection, by the heart no longer a stone. This soil bears fruits meet for repentance. Faith, love and humility, meekness, benevolence and diligence, are brought forth, with " patience."

Not, however, that all the fruitful are alike. They differ, indeed, from all the three former classes. The first had not patience enough to listen attentively to the word; the second had no patience to endure persecutions and afflictions; and the third persevered, but it was in a fruitless attempt to reconcile the love of the world with the love of the word. The last, however, by "patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, and finally lay hold of eternal life." Yet these fruitful ones differ among themselves; for very various are the degrees of improvement and of usefulness among even real Christians; some bringing forth a hundred, some sixty, some thirty fold; as seed, in different soils, produces various returns. The highest

order of Christians are those who have consecrated their whole beings to Christ; whose lives are a continual sacrifice to religion, and who, in death, pour out their blood to seal the truth. But those who produce a hundred fold are, we fear, the smallest number. There is another class, who, though they fall below the former, yet bear sixty fold. Their decision of character, their well-informed minds, their devotional spirit, their activity and usefulness, raise them to distinction, "purchasing for them a good degree and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus." These are the pillars of our churches, the co-operators and comforts of our ministers, and "the glory of Christ." The lowest class, however, we fear is the largest; those who produce thirty fold, who form the great mass of Christian professors, who have nothing to distinguish them but their separation from the world, and their union to the church, under the ministry of the faithful word. For while Christ promises to us all a hundred fold reward in the life to come, how few return to him a hundred fold in the present life! How large the majority of those who are contented with thirty fold!

Do you ask, why our Lord closed this parable with the words recorded by the Evangelist? "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not to be set on a candlestick?" We are here warned, that while men are under the sound of the Gospel, it is often a secret to us what returns they make; but the day is coming when our fruitfulness or barrenness shall be exposed to the view of the world. Oh, then, let us preach and hear in anticipation of the searching light of that great day of revelation.

Allow me to close by requesting you

First, to remark how our Lord declares, that only one in four receives the word into a fruitful heart. It has been calculated, by some practical men, that this is the actual proportion of persons who receive salvation by the preaching of the Gospel. What searchings of heart should this create! If only one in four are saved, then three out of every four are lost. Not that I mean to say, that in a congregation of four hundred persons, we may conclude there are only a

hundred Christians; for much depends on the kind of ministry enjoyed, and the length of time it has been in operation; so that, with a very superior administration of the word, and a long course of the enjoyment of Divine influences, half the congregation may be found members of the church, giving good evidence of the faith that worketh by love. But then, it must be remembered, that there are always some coming and going, forming no part of the fixed congregation, but constituting a large proportion of those that have heard the Gospel in any given place, and thus bringing the numbers to the ratio which the parable suggests. When the church bears so large a proportion to the congregation as to be a delightful exception to the ordinary rule, is it not high time to colonise, as some of the American churches have done? Can the world be subdued to the faith of Christ, without such efforts?

A second remark now suggests itself to our notice. It was the same seed that fell on the different kinds of soil, but only one kind proved productive. This was pronounced "good ground." How important is it, then, to have the heart prepared for the reception of the word! Thus we are taught the doctrine of an influence exerted immediately on the souls of the hearers, to fit them for the Gospel; to change the rocky into fertile soil. Though this influence may, to us, seem simultaneous with the sowing of the seed; it must really, in order of nature, be prior to all our successful efforts. What a stimulus to prayer should this be, both with us who are preachers, and to you our beloved hearers! If all our labours are spent on the preparation of the seed. we act as if we thought good grain would grow on rocks. How wisely did Luther say of a minister, "To have prayed well is to have studied well." Our care should be to say, "Lord, I have prepared my sermon: do thou prepare my hearers." And can we hope to benefit you, my dear friends, if we see you negligent of the address to God, satisfied when you have heard that to man? If you come too late for the prayer, can you come in time for the sermon?

A third remark invites our serious attention.

What is the cause of ruin to men? When we call up to our imagination the fearful spectacle of a lost soul, we naturally think it guilty of some gross crimes. But here a different idea is presented to us—a negative rather than a positive cause of perdition, even the worst soils are not said to have produced hemlock, or deadly nightshade, or any other poisonous plant. No; it was not what they did bear, but what they did not, that was their brand of reprobation. "They bore no good fruit to perfection." Barrenness was their sin. Why then repeat so obstinately the unavailing apology, "We have done nothing." Alas! our excuse is our crime.

The last remark which we should make on this parable concerns the different degrees of fruitfulness, which even the good ground exhibits.

Thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold, differ very widely. And who of us may not fear that we belong to a class that is the last among the fruitful, and the nearest to absolute barrenness? If this should be our case, can we wonder if we have small enjoyment of our religion, and faint assurance that we are not unprofitable hearers? And what humbling reflections should we make on the poor returns we render to the Lord for all the privileges we enjoy! To be contented with this state of things should be impossible. Yet we should not suppose that it is impossible to rise to a higher degree. Many who have commenced their Christian course with thirty degrees of usefulness have ended it with sixty, or even with a hundred. A deep and penitent reflection on our returns, on our obligations, and on our advantages, will rouse us to more earnest prayer, and to those efforts that will seldom fail of success. Our greatest danger arises from too readily concluding that "we have done what we could." Let us, then, be slow to believe this. Ask whether those who bring forth sixty fold, while you produce only thirty, have in reality greater advantages than you enjoy; and whether you would not, with their spirit, enjoy the bliss of their larger increase.

But, if we bring forth twice as much as the lowest class, we may yet fall as much below the highest. It is not al-

lowed to us to be content with any attainments, while there are still higher to be reached. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." What we have acquired furnishes the means of rising to still more lofty heights. The mind expands with efforts for advancement, and our influence increases with our usefulness. The growth of personal religion opens to us new sources of improvement, and the approbation of our Lord brings with it this privilege, that he gives us more to do and a heart to do it. The most useful men in the church have not been those who possessed the finest opportunities, arising from rank, or wealth, or genius; but those who turned to the utmost possible account what may be termed moderate advantages. Who knows what he can do till he attempts something that seemed almost out of his reach?

But, finally, the men who bring forth a hundred fold should feel their obligations to Him who has made them thus "fruitful in every good word and work." "For what have we that we have not first received?" In fact, a deep sense of the grace conferred on us is one of the prime fruits of grace. It is "by humility and the fear of the Lord," that we do any good in the earth. Small are our returns, if they are a hundred fold. For who can estimate the sum of our obligations to that Lord who has saved us from the curse of barrenness, and not only blessed us, but made us blessings? Short is our time for labour, and "what our hand finds to do we should do with our might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither we hasten."

LECTURE XI.

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES AND WHEAT.

MATT. xiii. 24-30, 37-43.

This parable, which is, at first sight, similar to the preceding, is found, on closer inspection, to be totally different. For Christ's parables are varied with exquisite delicacy and wisdom, and it is a great advantage that here we have his own interpretation. Having dismissed the multitude, he went into the house, and the disciples, being powerfully struck, said to him, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares in the field." We should take care to avail ourselves of the advantages afforded, both by their question and his answer; because many have, by their mistakes, shown the necessity for the inquiry and the value of the reply. The right understanding of this portion of the Divine word, is of the last importance; for how vast is the field which it opens to our view! The whole world, with all its varied history, from the first man, to the consummation of all things, at the judgment day. The entire scheme of the Divine government is here unfolded; and we see what it has produced, what it has permitted, and how it will, at last, be vindicated. The struggle between good and evil; the momentary triumph of sin; the errors of the righteous; their trials, their duties and their hopes, all pass before us.

I. See the fair scene with which the history of the world opens.

For here we have a fine morning, exhibiting, as David says, the rising sun, shining without clouds, after rain. The field is wide as the world; the first seed sown in it, is good as the children of the kingdom, and the sower, beneficent as the Son of man.

1. The field is wide as the world.

It may well excite astonishment that this has been totally overlooked, and an interpretation diametrically opposite obtruded, and as widely obtained. The field is the church, expositors have said, though Christ has said, "The field is the world." The mistake may have arisen from some similarity between this and the preceding parable. In that, however, the field was not strictly the church, but any place where the Gospel might be preached, of which the different effects were taught. Perhaps, also, the commencement of this discourse may have led some into error; because it is said, "the kingdom of heaven is like to a man that sowed good seed." But as the reign of heaven sometimes signifies the dominion of grace in the heart; so here it may be supposed to mean the moral government of God in the world. If, however, it be taken in its ordinary signification, as the church of Christ, it shows that this is placed in the field of this world, among wicked men, as wheat among tares. The field being mistaken for the church, the whole design of the parable has been lost, and under the authority of this misinterpretation, the church has been transformed into the world. But the commencement of the whole history of mankind is here exhibited to view, and we are taught,

2. That the first seed sown in the world was good, as the children of the kingdom.

"God made man upright, though he has sought out many inventions." The first pair of inhabitants in this wide world, were a lovely specimen of what we ought all to be. Adam is, therefore, called the "son of God," both as being the immediate product of the Divine power, without any other Father, and as bearing his parent's image. He that said to Israel, "I planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed," may say to this earth, "I sowed thee with the good seed of the children of the kingdom." "Children of God, heirs of the kingdom," are the honourable titles of those whom Heaven approves, as its faithful servants; just as children of France, and infants of Spain, were the grand titles of the offspring of the men who held the throne in those countries. Holy persons are born of God, and heirs of a kingdom. It

should never be forgotten, that with such seed this earth was at first sown; for, as God "made it not in vain, but formed it to be inhabited;" so, upon the dwellers on this earth, he stamped his own image, and, beholding "the work of his hands, in which he was glorified," he pronounced it "very good."

3. The sower is beneficent as the "Son of man."

This expression has, perhaps, contributed to mislead expositors, inducing them to conclude, that the church, or kingdom of grace, under the incarnate Saviour, was intended, because he is called the Son of man. But it should be remembered, that from the union of the human and Divine nature in Christ's one person, those attributions which are proper to him, only in one nature, are often made to the whole person. Thus, "the church in the wilderness," is said to have "tempted Christ," though that name belongs to him, only as anointed with the Spirit, after the incarnation. Here we are informed, that he who afterwards became the Son of man, founded the church in the earth; for from the beginning, he "rejoiced in its habitable parts, and his delights were with the sons of men;" so that he was with the church in the wilderness. In the strictest sense, the Son of man did not plant the church in the earth, even after the incarnation; for this was done by the Apostles, when he had ascended to heaven; and it was never without tares, even in its purest days.

But the field being the world, you must look back to its first condition, when none but holy persons were in paradise; for from God nothing but good can come; and when the world had none in it but those who were such as God made them, it had none but good beings, the work of him who afterwards became the Son of man; for "all things were created by Christ and for him."

II. Behold the dark cloud that soon came over the world. "While men slept, an enemy sowed tares in the field." That a melancholy change has passed on the moral character of man, and that we are not now "wholly a right seed," a field of good wheat, none can deny. For what the theologian

states, as a doctrine, the historian records as a fact, and all concur in proclaiming the quantity of wickedness that is found among mankind. Let us, then, consider—the tares that arose in the field—the enemy that sowed them—and their mixture with the wheat.

- 1. The tares that are now found in the field of the world. That which our farmers sow, under the name of tares, or vetches, is, from its very first growth, so utterly unlike wheat, and is so useful as food for cattle, that it cannot be what Christ designed here, which was, at first, not to be distinguished from wheat, and, at last, was fit only to be burned. But what we call darnel, or rye grass, would not be distinguished from wheat, till both advanced towards maturity; and there is a species of it, called *lolium temulentum*, or drunken weed,* on account of its intoxicating
- * Maitre de Sacy seems to have intended this, by the word l'ivraie. It, doubtless, was Virgil's infelix lolium. Lolium temulentum, or darnel grass, is of the natural family, gramineæ, or grasses. The grasses form one of the most natural families of plants with which botanists are acquainted; the structure and external appearance of one species bearing so striking a resemblance to another, that it is almost impossible, on the slightest inspection, not to see the relationship that exists between them, from the various common meadow-grasses, and grains of our fields, to the handsome sugar-cane and bamboo of the East. The alliance between the fruits of the grasses, as regards their properties, is not less remarkable. For, with the single exception of this darnel grass, they all afford wholesome and nutritious food for man and animals, so that the seeds of any of the species which are sufficiently large, might be used as articles of diet. That we may easily avail ourselves of these valuable properties, the grasses have been widely distributed over the greatest part of the surface of the globe, their geographical distribution being more extensive than that of almost any other family of plants. The seed of this darnel grass, however, is not only not wholesome, but actually poisonous, and has been known to produce (when taken accidentally) headache, giddiness, convulsions, and death. Now, if we reflect, for a moment, on the importance to society, of a good supply of bread, the staff of life, and how dire must be the effects of any serious adulteration of that article, we may easily conceive the injury that would be inflicted on a community, were any evil-disposed person to sow in the corn fields such a proportion of this poisonous darnel grass, as should render the whole harvest pernicious.

effects, which might be intended, as it was fit only for the fire. Such tares our Lord employs, to signify the children of the wicked one; for bad men are called "sons of Belial," and "children of the devil." These so abound in the world, that the Greek proverb says, "The multitude are evil." Our nature being corrupted, and the "wicked being estranged from the womb, going astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies;" as men advance to maturity, their evil nature is discovered. Ah! what tares are the children of fallen Adam! How foolish! how wicked! how wretched! how changed from him that was "created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after the image of Him that created him!" How widely is the field of the world sown with these tares! How vast a crop it produces of what is fit only to be burned! Even the philosophical moralist, who rejects the Scripture doctrine of the fall and depravity of our nature, still declaims against the wickedness of mankind.

2. The enemy that sowed these tares "is the devil." Some, indeed, would persuade us that there is no such being, that he is a mere figure of speech. But Christ, who came to destroy the works of the devil, and to lead us into all truth, here teaches us that such an enemy both exists and acts with tremendous force. Having quarrelled with his Maker, Satan attempts to spoil the work of God's hands, and to murder the children of the kingdom, out of rage against the Heavenly King. The first that lost God's holy image, in which Satan was originally created, becomes, like all other apostates, a bitter enemy to his former friend, and with envious spite aims to destroy holiness wherever it is seen. On innocent man, therefore, an attack was made; and while men slept and were off their guard, the enemy sowed tares in the field, or sought to turn the wheat itself into tares. The first temptation of Satan, which has filled the world with wicked men, forms one of the first and most important chapters of Divine revelation. For this is its grand doctrine, that God is not the author of evil, but of good; that he "made man upright;" and that one who is an enemy to God

and man is the author of evil. Our Creator assures us that he "is good and doeth good," and that "wickedness proceeds from the wicked." The tares themselves show who has sowed them; the children of the wicked one clearly indicating who is their father, by doing his works, taking his part, and labouring with him to deprive God of the harvest of love, obedience, and glory, which he should reap from this world. Hence flows,

3. The mixture of the tares and the wheat in this field.

This has created great embarrassment, and gives rise to a duty often violated. Both the cause and the cure of evil have perplexed men. The cause created anxious inquiries: "Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in the field? whence then has it tares?"

"Whence cometh evil?" has racked the minds of men in all ages. The Greek philosophers said, "If there are gods, whence cometh evil? if there are not, whence cometh good?"
They concluded, that, if we admit the existence of deity, we must ascribe to it every thing else that exists; and much evil exists; and if, to avoid this difficulty, we deny the existence of God, then we have no adequate cause of good. But the Scriptures affirm that God is the author of good, and deny that he is the author of sin. Good requires a positive cause, which is good; but evil, or depravity, being privation, is the result of a negative cause, or negation, the absence of what should exist. Though evil has entered into the world, it does not follow that God created it. Knowledge and strength require positive causes; but ignorance and weakness are the mere absence of knowledge and strength, or the consequence of the non-operation of positive causes. Not satisfied with this, some anxious inquirers still ask, "Why was the negative cause suffered to operate? if we may use that term, when we mean rather the absence of the operation of the positive cause of good? Why was the enemy, in whom wickedness first took effect, suffered to extend his apostacy to this world and sow tares here also?" We answer, this is, in effect, but asking, why God erected a moral government at all? To many of these queries we may not be

able to return answers that will satisfy every one, for the whole extent of this inquiry is beyond our grasp. Feeling that our knowledge is limited on every hand, and that every object reminds us of our ignorance, should we wonder that there is something in the vast field of God's moral government that we cannot understand? Should it not suffice us to hear him say, "An enemy has done this?" Why should we inquire farther? Can we know what he has chosen to conceal? "Secret things belong to the Lord our God; but things revealed to us and our children, that we may keep the commandments of God." If you wish to know more, hasten to that heaven where "we shall see face to face, and know as we are known."

But the cure, as well as the cause, has created embarrassment; for the servants said, "Wilt thou that we root up the tares?" How clearly our Lord foresaw our tempers and our errors! But how surprising it is, that, with this Scripture before their eyes, men have not seen that the attempt to root the wicked out of the earth was the offspring of ignorance or of passion! The followers of Socious have inveighed against Calvin for burning Servetus, and the tragedy was not only cruel but infamous. Yet they seem not to have known, or not to have heeded, that Socinus imprisoned Davidis for refusing to worship Christ, though both held him to be a mere man. For burning heretics, Protestants condemn Catholics; but these confound and shame us, by asking, Did not Cranmer burn those who were called Anabaptists? Though one man's crime will not excuse that of another, all afford proof that the error of these servants has spread widely over the world and the church, and that men were universally bewildered with the notion that it was their duty to root up the wicked, as tares that ought not to be suffered to mingle with the good seed, the children of the kingdom of God. To put away the wicked seemed so good a thing, that men thought it could not be a sin. Knowing that God intended to do it, at last; they said, "Why should not we do it, at present?" They saw that government was instituted to execute "vengeance on evil doers;" and they did not see why they should not attempt to rid the earth of all

evil characters; not observing that actually to punish those who disturbed the public peace was necessary for the very existence of society; but to institute an inquisition into men's characters and sentiments was beyond the competency of any but the Searcher of hearts. If we have not yet sufficiently learned this mystery, learn now the duty that is so difficult to be performed; "let both grow together till the harvest." This, as the grand moral of the parable, should sink down into our hearts. For why perplex ourselves with metaphysical inquiries about the cause, and pass slightly by that which is so much more important to us, the duty that arises out of this mixture of good and evil? Could we understand the cause of evil as clearly as God himself sees it, what would this avail us, if we did not discharge our own duty arising out of it? Having reversed Christ's interpretation of the whole parable, by saying the field is the church, many were unable to understand his injunction, because it would seem to render it our duty to suffer all sorts of heretics and criminals in the church. If, on the other hand, they applied it to the world, they were afraid of taking away the magistrates' power to punish criminals. But, again, I would remind you, my friends, of our Lord's own interpretation, "the field is the world;" the two sorts of seed sown in it are the two kinds of men, the children of God and the children of the wicked one; or the truly pious and those who are destitute of true religion. The practical lesson of the parable, then, is, that we should not attempt to root wicked men out of the world, but suffer them to live together with the pious, till the day of judgment shall separate them. The civil magistrate is to punish evil doers; and, for this, he bears not the sword in vain; but it is not the want of true religion which the state is to punish, for the commission of crimes destructive of the peace of society is that which calls for the magistrate's interference. The church, on the other hand, is not the field; and, therefore, the command, to "let both grow together," has nothing to do with the duty of those who bear rule in the church, which is to be guided by a very different maxim, given in another part of Scripture, where it is said, "Put away from among you the wicked person." Beyond this, the church must not go, nor hurt a hair of a man's head. For "what have we to do to judge those that are without" the church? "The power which the Lord has given us is for edification, and not for destruction." Again, I repeat the charge, let both grow together. If, however, you ask me why; I answer,

1. Because of our own ignorance, "lest, while we attempt to gather out the tares, we root up the wheat also." For "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" What pretences can we set up to infallibility, in distinguishing the wheat from the tares? Were the Sovereign of the universe, this moment, to bid the angel of judgment deliver to you, my friends, his sword, and authorise you to cut off every ungodly person from the face of the earth, would you slay, right and left, and kill boldly? Would you not hesitate, before you aimed the first stroke, afraid to kill this, or to spare that man? Would not your pale and anxious countenance say, "I am not quite sure whether I ought not to spare this person, for there are some good appearances in him; or whether I ought not kill that man, for there are many evil things in him?" Should we not see the sword drop, and return to its scabbard, and hear you say, "Minister of vengeance, take thy sword back again; for I know not how to use it. It suits thy hand, not mine"? Then let us all say, "Thanks to thy name, O God, that we are not commanded to root out the tares, or compelled to be ministers of wrath, angels of death." Forbearance becomes us better than vengeance. For, knowing as much evil as we do of ourselves, we should almost doubt whether we ought not to turn the point of the sword to our own breasts, first. As men who seem to stand with one foot in heaven and the other in hell, we should be distracted with everlasting uncertainty concerning our own duty and our brother's doom. Why, then, have men contended, as for a privilege, in behalf of that right which would prove an intolerable burden? Why have they been so slow to acknowledge, that it is mercy to them-selves to be forbidden to execute judgment on others? There

is another reason why we should let both tares and wheat grow together:

2. Because of our brother's interests.

The tares and the wheat are supposed to be so much alike, at first, that they could not be distinguished till the crop had considerably advanced. If, then, we attempt to root out the tares, we may tear up the young wheat, mistaking the immaturity for the absence of religion; and because there is not as much religion as there should be, concluding that there is none at all. But, "Take heed that you injure not one of these little ones." Who knows how long real religion may remain in a state of infancy? "When, for the time, ye ought to be teachers," says the Apostle, "ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat." Not only may a mature Christian mistake the infancy for the absence of religion, but a mere child in piety may condemn one better than himself; as some pious, well-meaning catholics have condemned protestants as infidels. He that loves mercy, rather than judgment, and that would have saved the whole city of Sodom for the sake of ten righteous men in it, will have all the tares spared, rather than root up the youngest shoot of wheat. Ah, how many good men have been sacrificed to the foolish attempt to root out the wicked! If it were even clear as the sun that a certain person was a child of the devil, why wouldst thou smite him? "What! wouldst thou send him quick to hell?" said Edward VI., when remonstrating with Cranmer against the burning of heretics. Who knows but that he who is now a child of the wicked one may become an heir of the kingdom? Had Saul been smitten when breathing out threatenings and slaughter, would he ever have preached the faith which he once destroyed? What a loss would the church have sustained by cutting him off in his sins!

Let both remain together, in the same world, in the

Let both remain together, in the same world, in the same kingdom, in the same town, in the same house, in the same bed; for "how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" "If the unbeliever choose to de-

part, let her depart," says Paul, "but let not the believer put her away." For who knows, but that, if both live together, thou mayest save her soul? What! wouldest thou slay, O father, the children of thine own body? or, put out of thy house, thy unconverted child? Do they not grow together, that thou mayest be twice a parent to thy child? That he may be "thine own son, in the faith, as well as in the flesh?" But who can pretend to enumerate all the advantages that may result from the mixture of good and evil in this world? advantages to both parties; for the exercise of our graces towards the wicked, may not only end in their conversion; but will infallibly promote our own sanctification, and will glorify God, by showing what his grace can do to fit us for the most difficult duties. By the sight of a Christian's character, God has called many to the knowledge of himself.

III. The bright Sun of justice, shall, at last, burst forth and separate the darkness from the light.

"The harvest is the end of the world," when the "Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear let him hear." We need not be in haste to make this separation; the destined moment is advancing, and will come soon enough, and the separation will then be wide enough. At this part of the parable I shall but glance, reminding you of

1. The season, "the end of the world."

Scoffers, say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were." There will be an end of the world, as surely as there was a beginning. The voice of history, both sacred and profane, teaches us that the present scene has not been from eternity; the voice of reason assures us, that it is preparatory to something farther, and the voice of revelation declares, that "the judge standeth at the door. The Lord will come, and bring to light the hidden things of darkness." "Then shall ye

return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." The end of the world! What a thought! But, "who shall live when God does this?" We shall all see it! This we know, and sometimes it shakes the soul with terrors. "I dreamed that the world was come to an end," said one who waked up in horrors. But, why should we need dreams to place these waking realities before our eyes? Have we not the world of the Creator of the world, to assure us, that "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works therein, shall be burnt up? Seeing, then, that all these shall be destroyed, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?" Then will come,

2. The separation.

This will be made by the angels, who shall be Christ's ministers, at the last judgment, and shall receive his command, to gather up, first the tares, taking out of the kingdom "all that offend and do iniquity." But what separations shall then be made! "One shall be taken," says Christ, "and the other left; where two have lain together in the same bed." From being mingled in all the relations of life, and in all possible circumstances; every bond will be burst, to separate the righteous from the wicked. Here the babe is torn from the mother's embrace, to be borne to heaven; while she sinks down to hell. There, the husband and wife, that were one, shall be divided to two worlds, this for glory, and that for eternal shame. Now, the parent ascends to heaven; and then the children fall, as by their own weight. to the bottomless abyss. Brothers and sisters part, never to meet again; members of the same church separate, some having been sincere, and some hypocrites. They go off from each other, wide as heaven from hell. What discoveries! What surprise! What horrors! What agonies! What despair! But will it be all separation? No; there will be

3. The union of each one to his own class.

"The tares will be bound together for the burning." This association with their own kind, will be scarcely less terment-

ing than the separation from others. Sinners have sometimes attempted, by fierce persecution, to put the righteous out of the way, and to have none but those who are like themselves on the earth. They would have hated their own work, if they could have accomplished it; for, then, they would have learned how much the tares were indebted to the wheat; and what benefactors to men are those who fear, and serve God. But they need not be so much in haste, nor plunge themselves in fresh guilt, to accomplish a separation that the Judge will effect, alas! too soon for them. The separation then will be complete and final. There will soon be not one righteous person left among the wicked. The Judge has said, that he will "divide the sheep from the goats;" and his eye is omniscient and his arm omnipotent. Then will the wicked find their own species to be their own torment. Lions may agree with lions, and wolves with wolves; but the cruel, the unclean, the proud, the haters of God, the blasphemers, will, by infernal passions, and mutual reproaches, add fuel to each other's flames. Alas! for the tares, when they shall be bound up in bundles!

But the wheat shall be gathered into the heavenly garner. Why are we so impatient of the present mixture? What, though the wicked are the troublers of the earth? This affliction will be but of short duration. The Psalmist anticipates the moment of separation, exclaiming, " Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, let the wicked be no more: bless thou the Lord, O my soul." Soon will these blots on the fair face of creation, be removed, and nothing be left to mar the beauty of God's works! All things will then unite to raise our admiration and inspire our praise. The "redeemed will walk together," in the golden streets; as the spirits of the just made perfect, now enjoy each other's society. This fellowship of saints has been the desire and delight of the righteous on earth, and will be their portion and their joy in heaven; where "no foe will enter, nor friend depart." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;" a sun without spots and without clouds. No longer will they be defiled and distressed by the

society, example, and conversation of the wicked; but, refined, and animated, and delighted, by the presence and converse of the wise, the holy, the lovely, the blessed, they will burst forth, as a system of suns, each one giving and receiv-

ing light, heat, and glory.

Oh, let the children of the wicked one hear and know, that, as an enemy once transformed the wheat into tares, there is a friendly power that can transform the tares into wheat. God can translate those who were "aliens and enemies in their minds, by wicked works, from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of his dear Son." But, quickly, quickly, must this be done; for the harvest is coming on. You are growing. Yes; the tares grow till the harvest. But to grow in wickedness! Grow fitter for the flames! Grow for a harvest of ruin! Grow among the just, till the Judge shall say; "Now separate them from all that are mine, and let each one go to his own place!" Look at the pious, amongst whom you have lived, and think of the use you should make of their society. Become like them; or be for ever separated from them.

"Children of the kingdom," learn, that one of your prime duties upon earth, is to conduct yourselves aright towards the "children of the wicked one." Enmity and persecution ill become you; and will receive no thanks from him who said, "Let both grow together." Spare the wicked, pity them; labour and pray for them. Thus you were spared, while you were yourselves evil! The example, the efforts, the prayers of the saints have succeeded for your conversion, and now yours should be employed in behalf of those who "are as you once were." It is only, "till the harvest," that you are to be thus tried. Then shall you "dwell among your own people;" and when you "shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of your Father," it will be pleasant to know that you once shone "as lights in a dark place. He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

LECTURE XII.

ON THE SHORTER PARABLES, AND THE REASON FOR PREACHING BY SIMILITUDES.

MATT. xiii. 10-17, 31-35. MARK iv. 26-29.

Compression and expansion are the two powers employed in physics, to alter the forms of bodies; and in the intellectual world, minds are instructed, sometimes by largely unfolding an important principle, and sometimes by compressing it in few words. Our Redeemer, after expatiating at considerable length on some of his instructive comparisons of heavenly things with earthly, throws out a number of others in the form of hints, despatched in a single verse, and gives an answer to his disciples' inquiries after his motives for adopting this mode of teaching. I shall follow him, here, also; and as we have gone at large into the exposition of two, I shall now collect together the rest into one discourse, which will also unfold the reasons he assigns for teaching in parables.

I. Six short parables.

These are, the growth of corn; the grain of mustard seed; the leaven hidden in meal; the treasure in a field; the pearl of great price; and the net cast into the sea.

1. The growth of corn: Mark iv. 26.

This has been, by a very pious minister, interpreted so beautifully, on the supposition that it signifies what is called the kingdom of grace, or the reign of religion in the heart; that I feel reluctant to disturb that opinion. Yet, fidelity to the word of God commands me to say, that the preceding parable, and those which follow, manifestly refer to the reign of religion in the world; and it is not to be supposed, without better evidence than has been adduced, that our Saviour changes the import of the phrase kingdom of God, in this

one sentence. The seed, then, is the Gospel, preached in the world, as corn is cast into the ground.

"Whether he that sowed it sleep, or whether he rise night and day to watch it; the seed grows, and he knows not how." The influence of the word, expanding by secret means, and imperceptible degrees, the most faithful and vigilant preacher is subject to great vicissitudes of feeling. By alternations of hope and fear, he is now discouraged, saying, "Who has believed our report?" perceiving little fruit of his labours; and, now delightfully surprised to find that what he thought was "like water spilt upon the ground, that cannot be gathered up again," was as "bread ground, that cannot be gathered up again," was as "bread corn cast on the well-watered soil;" or like rice sown in corn cast on the well-watered soil;" or like rice sown in meadows laid under water, that, after some days, springs up again, and fills the spectator with astonishment at the abundant increase. Every preacher who is not "like the ostrich that leaveth her eggs in the sand, carcless whether the foot of the traveller crush them, or the wild beast destroy them," well knows, that undue discouragements are often counterbalanced by delightful surprise.

When it is said, "the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself," the Greek word is abτομάτη, which has been naturalised among us so as to produce the term automaton, which

among us, so as to produce the term automaton, which signifies a self-moving machine; but here it is employed to express, not the exclusion of the power of God, but of the aids of man. When the seed is committed to the ground, we not only cannot see it vegetate, but if we did, we could not aid it. In like manner, the principles of the Gospel make their way among men, and in the world, without the supervision of our eye, or the force of our arm. As the first shoots of corn resemble common grass, so the earlier effects of the Gospel are not distinguished, among men in general, from human opinions; and thus the truth, at first, escapes persecution, because the enemies want discernment to anticipate the consequences that will follow. The Roman emperors originally mistook Christianity for a Jewish sect. After a time, effects of a more marked character developed themselves, as when the supposed grass shows the young

green ear of corn. When the progress of the Gospel to universal dominion began to appear, the powers of the world were alarmed, and raised the blast of persecution, to destroy the crop. At length comes the full produce, the corn that is food for man; which represents the final result of the Gospel, as it is exhibited in Psalm lxxii. "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth on the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." But when the whole crop which the earth is destined to bear, shall, in due course of time, become fit for the granary, the voice shall be heard, "Put in the sickle; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So has the Gospel secretly augmented and advanced, from small and imperceptible commencements, to more manifest influence; and still it is pressing on, to accomplish the full purposes of Heaven. Such fruits will arise from the Christian religion as have never yet been seen; and when the whole field shall exhibit the golden ears, bending down heavy with grain, "then cometh the end."

Turn we now to,

2. The grain of mustard seed.

To awaken attention to the diversity of his illustrations, our Saviour asks, "What parable shall I now employ?" The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, to which Jesus, in another place, compares the smallest faith. Christ's kingdom was, at first, so small, that nothing could seem more insignificant than twelve poor fishermen, sent forth by a carpenter, who had been hanged as a criminal; and the converts they gained were the poor and despised, while their principles seemed utterly unfit to sway the world. But the smallest of all seeds, produces the mustard plant, which, in the east, sometimes rises very high, and spreads widely. We can scarcely form an idea, in our cold climate, of the growth of vegetation in such a country as Judea. The rabbis speak of the sinapi or mustard, in the same manner as our Lord; though nothing could be farther from their intention than to confirm his words. Herodotus, also, speaking of the greatness of the millet and sesame

amounting to that of a tree, says, "What I know I will not mention, thinking it would seem incredible."

Such shall be the growth of the "plant of renown," of which the Prophet speaks. I cannot allow myself to dilate, as some do, upon the influence of what they would call Christianity, when lifting her mitred head in courts and parliaments. But the *genuine* religion of Jesus has spread widely, and afforded shelter for men under its branches. They that were ready to perish have fled thither, and found, in what was, at first, so lowly and despised, a resting and a hiding place. The high and lofty, when brought down by a sense of their sin and their danger, have been overjoyed to take refuge under the shadow of the Cross.

The highest triumphs of the religion of Jesus are, however, yet to come. "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. The glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, and all nations shall be blessed in Christ." Then "Fear not, little flock;" for, however small and despised, and remote from all appearance of empire, "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The contrast between the primitive littleness, feebleness, and meanness of the kingdom of Christ, and its final extension, supremacy, glory and felicity, will fill with astonishment and delight those who live in the age that shall admit them to cast their eye back from its final, to its primeval state.

The next parable is,

3. The leaven hidden in meal.

Our word leaven, is derived from the leavings of a former baking, which, having become sour, were mixed with the next quantity of meal that was to be made into bread, in order to produce the fermentation which we now create, by what is called barm, or yeast. Our Saviour said, that the leaven was hidden in three measures of meal, in allusion, probably, to the quantity usually made, at each time, in an ordinary family. But it is the property of leaven to diffuse itself and impart its qualities to the whole mass with which

it is mixed. It is, therefore, employed here, to show the influence and progress of the Gospel, which, as in the former parable, is said to be hidden. The enemies, knowing neither its existence nor its operation, nor its destination, were unable to counterwork it. But, however small and unknown the religion of Jesus was at first, it has a prodigious power, like leaven, that will overcome almost any weight that might be employed to press it down. It has also an assimilating influence to change the whole mass with which it is mixed. Thus is the Gospel destined to produce a moral revolution in the world. "Christ must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet." All the institutions of society shall be sanctified by the influence of the Christian religion; "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of God and his Christ; and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." See its transforming influence and its tendency to absolute sway in the islands of the South Seas; where, from cannibalism, infanticide, perpetual war, abominable idolatry and foul obscenity; men are transformed to sons of peace, benevolence, purity, and piety, by the Gospel of Christ, brought to them on the lips of a little band of humble, obscure missionaries, who lived among them for years, despised, and incapable of speaking their language; but have now leavened with evangelical principles the whole mass of society.

The next parable is,

4. The treasure hidden in a field.

In times of war, when an enemy overruns a country, its inhabitants often attempt to conceal their valuables, not in their houses or gardens, which might naturally be searched, but in a distant field; so that coins are often turned up by the ploughshare of the husbandman, or by those who dig to lay the foundation of buildings. The man who buried the treasure was sometimes taken far away, and no other knew the secret deposit. If, after the lapse of time, any one finds it in a field that does not belong to him, he is naturally disposed to conceal the discovery, and part with all his other

property to buy this field, hoping that what it contains will richly repay him.

The salvation of the Gospel lies hidden from men in general; they know not that there is in the Bible a treasure which will enrich them for eternity; and many, who profess to know, read the sacred book without finding "the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy."

Men may dig a field all over, but not go deep enough to reach the treasure that lies under their feet. Some honestly tell us that they have read the Bible through, and do not find much in it. Alas! for them. But when Christ "opens our understandings to understand the Scriptures," and the true worth and glory of his religion are discovered, and its power to make us rich and blessed for ever is known, by believing the Divine testimony, we are glad to sacrifice every thing else to the enjoyment of this first of blessings. This parable may, at first, seem most applicable to single individuals; but I am still inclined to think that the Redeemer here, also, keeps up the same reference to the reign of religion in the world. Though the treasure has hitherto been, in a great degree, hidden from mankind, "the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth;" men will find they have been treading upon mines of wealth and springs of bliss, and will then sacrifice all that they have held most dear to the possession of true religion. Their wars, which they have made their glory, they will abandon, for the peaceful influence of the Gospel, saying of it, "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey;" discovering, though late, that peace was the most splendid victory. Their worldly religion they will renounce for the spiritual and heavenly principles of the genuine kingdom of heaven; and their luxury and pride for the meekness, temperance, and heavenly-mindedness in which they will find solid bliss. Great will be the joy of the world on making this discovery. When the earth shall be studded over with churches, as the heavens with stars; when men have cast away their carnal weapons, "beaten their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;" when they have pulled down their gaols and their

gibbets, because religion has triumphed over depravity, and mercy has rejoiced over judgment; when they have exchanged their compulsory poor's rates for the voluntary charity of the fellowship of the saints; they will be astonished to think how much they had formerly been their own enemies, and will adore Him who has at length made them glad with the treasures of his wisdom and grace.

Another parable spake Jesus.

5. The pearl of great price.

The ancient merchants were not like ours, who carry on commerce with the ends of the earth, by means of agents or of letters, or bills of exchange; but were rather like those Jews, who travel from one country to another, though often rich, and trading in gold and jewels. Such itinerant merchants around the shores of the Red Sea, or the Arabian or Persian Gulf, would sometimes meet with pearl-divers, who had brought up rare specimens, of which they scarcely knew the worth, or, if they did, could not find a trader rich enough to purchase them. This was the rich merchant's opportunity for making an immense fortune by parting with all his other treasure in exchange for such a pearl as might, in a distant country, or at the court of some prince, obtain an enormous price. For though the pearl is a mere excrescence in a muscle (usually called an oyster), it is so beautiful a production of the Creator, that it has been chosen for the ornament of the bosom of beauty, or the crown of dominion; and though the small ones, called seed-pearls, are of little worth, the large are valued so highly that the one which the mother of Marcus Brutus presented to Cæsar was estimated at 60,000l. Cleopatra is said to have dissolved in acid, and drunk off, one valued at 200,000l. But what are all the treasures of earth, or those which "the dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear," to that salvation which is hidden in Christ and his Gospel? They who are seeking treasures of bliss, and "the durable riches of righteousness," find them, when they find Christ, and discover that "we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish

and without spot." For this, therefore, the enlightened individual, or the converted world, will part with every thing else, satisfied to be adorned with its beauty and enriched with its worth. With what delight will they sacrifice their glittering toys, to possess and enjoy that great salvation which they once ignorantly despised, because it was "to them a pearl hidden in a muscle!"

The last of the shorter parables now remains to be considered.

6. The net cast into the sea.

This will easily be seen to point out, not the case of an individual, or the state of religion in the heart; but the condition of the whole church, or the reign of religion in the world. The preaching of the Gospel is like casting a net into the sea; for Christ promised his ministers that they should "become fishers of men." But though their net incloses some which are taken from the others that are still left in the sea, on drawing it to shore, it is found to have inclosed very different kinds of fish. Our preaching brings out of the wide world of the openly profane, into the visible communion of the church, characters of various kinds. As "the word shall not return void, but shall accomplish that which God pleases," we shall always gather some real Christians, though, even among these, there are great differences in natural talent and temper, and in degrees, either of grace or of usefulness. But some who are gathered into the visible church will be found to be yet unconverted. Affected by the word, they make a religious profession; and their hypocrisy is not always, perhaps not often, known to themselves. Ministers are, therefore, warned to exercise jealousy over their ministry and their flocks; for "if any man's work be burned he shall suffer loss;" and professors are warned not to rely on their reception into a church as an infallible evidence of grace. For see, when the end of the world is come; when fishing shall be over; when preaching is silenced; when profession is no more; after the gathering comes the sifting; after the harvest, the winnowing; after drawing the net, the selecting of the fishes and assigning them to their

proper place. "So shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that work iniquity."

On this separation, however, I shall not dwell, having enlarged upon it, in the exposition of the parable of the tares

and the wheat.

This remarkable sermon of parables our Lord closes by assigning,

II. The reasons for teaching by parable.

We cannot wonder that the disciples should come to their Lord and say, "Why speakest thou to them in parables?" Christ therefore assigns the following reasons:

1. To fulfil Scripture; Matt. xiii. 35. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." This is a quotation from the seventy-eighth Psalm. Peter speaks of David as "being a prophet," and by that name he might here be called. The psalm, however, is, in the title, called an instruction from Asaph, termed a seer, or prophet.* But Isaiah being quoted in the same chapter, seems to have led some one to insert his name here. As his prophecies do not, however, contain this passage, it is desirable to know that the most ancient copies and versions do not contain the name of Isaiah. But the word parable is of rather extensive import, meaning almost any species of instructive comparison. That peculiar kind which rendered Christ's preaching so remarkable, we do not find mentioned in the Psalms of David; but the teaching of truth by bold figures was common both to the Psalmist and to the Saviour. The things which had formerly been kept secret were thus announced, and with a peculiar though somewhat awful design. By the mention of the prophecies of Scripture, we are taught to reverence that word which our Redeemer kept continually in view, and which he spake and acted, lived and died, to fulfil, "All

things that are written concerning me," he says, "must be fulfilled." Another design was,

2. To hide truth from the careless.

"To them that are without, all things are uttered in parables, that, seeing, they may not perceive." This is a quotation from Isaiah the sixth, and might, therefore, have been included in the former reason for speaking in parables—that of fulfilling the Scriptures. But it demands some further notice; that we may "vindicate the ways of God to man." Our whole existence on this earth is a probation; and therefore every thing is designed to try us. Enigmas, that seem to mislead us, are a necessary exercise of our faculties, and a test of our character. If we are rash and careless, and are taken with first appearances, we shall surely be punished for our indolence and temerity. For he that should judge of things by the first blush, would conclude that the sun is a flat surface, that we might almost cover with our hand, and is not, in fact, very far removed from our reach. How many objects in nature appear, at first, as they are not! But, in the affairs of this life, we soon learn to correct our first false judgments; and, for the sake of temporal advantages and enjoyments, we begin early to penetrate beyond the outside, and to distinguish between things as they appear and things as they are. Why, then, do we not act thus wisely in the affairs of the soul and eternity? Because we are here reckless, and indifferent to our own interests. When, therefore, men hear a sacred parable, taken with the amusing story, and not wishing to penetrate farther, they go away without the benefit designed to be conveyed. It is to be feared that many of Christ's hearers lost sight of the truth he taught, because their imaginations were fascinated with the charm of the story, which was the mere drapery, and they never cared to look out for that truth which formed the body and the substance. They heard the parable, but per-ceived not its moral; they were amused with sounds, of which they cared not for the sense; thus they listened to the Prince of preachers and remained unconverted. For so is the word of God constructed, says Grotius, that it may be a Lydian stone, a touchstone to try men's dispositions. No part of the Old Testament is more frequently quoted in the New than this prophecy of Isaiah, in which the Jews were warned that the Messiah would so speak, that they should see and not see; hear and not understand. Alas! they did not take the warning.

Another design of the parables was, 3. To show special favour to the faithful. "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." Mark iv. 16.

But though to believers it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; as they, too, are involved in the common ruin, and are not yet perfectly cured of their evil disposition; Christ says, "Know ye not this parable? then how will ye know all parables?" After teaching the multitude in parables, the Saviour expounded all these things to the disciples in private. They had the double advantage of hearing truth in a more impressive form than that of abstract reasoning, and of being taught to penetrate, through the shell, and extract the kernel of heavenly wisdom. In this way, truth is always obtained, not by the mere external means, open to all; but by subsequent reflection, by devout meditation and study, and by secret prayer to the Father of lights, which are the duties of all, though performed by few. "Therefore, blessed are your ears if they hear; and your eyes if they see, things that are hidden from the eyes and ears of many." What you thus gain by the double grace of the general means, and the illumination of mind given to the faithful few you are bound to improve to the heaven of him. faithful few, you are bound to improve, to the honour of him who has thus distinguished you, and the good of all around. For we are blessed, not for ourselves alone; but that we may be a blessing. "Have you," says Christ, "understood these things?" They replied, "Yes, Lord;" and he said, "every scribe who is instructed into the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old." Finally; the parables were designed,

4. To enforce the sacred duty of "taking heed how we hear."

There is nothing which seems to men to require less caution, than hearing the word of God; for they rush to it, with heedless steps, as to a mere amusement, seeming to say; "if it does us no good, it will do us no harm." Not so, however, speaks our Lord; for he says, "Take heed how ye hear;" as if it were a critical and difficult affair, fraught with tremendous consequences. Thus his solemn and friendly caution is set up, like a lighthouse, on a dangerous shore, whither the ignorant might steer; because it is pleasant to move towards the light; but whose language, the prudent mariner knows well to be this:--" Beware of the rock on which others have split." Take heed, therefore, why you hear, that it be not for mere amusement, but for heavenly wisdom; take heed what you hear, that it be not error which will blind you, but truth that will enlighten and make you wise to salvation; take heed before you hear, that you rush not carelessly into the presence of God, but seek with solemn steps and devout supplication, for the divine blessing; take heed while you hear, that your thoughts be not wandering, as the fool's eye to the ends of the earth, but that your fixed attention may cause the word to sink down into the centre of your soul; take heed after you hear, that you lose not the recollection of what you have heard, but follow it up with earnest prayer, that it may prove "the engrafted word that is able to save your souls."

For how dreadful would it be to find, at last, that we had heard, without attention, and seen, without perception, and received saving truths, in such a way that we should not be converted, and healed, and saved! What a cruel mockery! But whose fault will it be? Do not, I entreat you, lay the blame on God; for he has solemnly apprized you of your danger, and told you that thus it may be. Warned of God, then, "Take heed;" be on the look out; eye the lighthouse; beware of the rock; see the breakers; hear their dash; behold the foam; observe the wrecks that lie about; take warning from others, lest you become wrecks, to give

others warning! Rouse all your solicitudes, to guard against such a danger, and earnestly ask for the aids of that Saviour who expounded and enforced in private, what he had taught in public. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. If any man lack wisdom, therefore, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." We should never open the Bible without saying, in our hearts, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" nor should we ever listen to the preaching of the Gospel, without "taking heed how we hear." But having received the saving truth in a form so engaging, so calculated to arrest attention, to impress the memory, and to affect the heart; turn it to the best account. "Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you in all wisdom." The vivid scenes which he has presented to your imagination, should be ever before the mind's eye, while the Divine instruction should fill the understanding and affect the heart. Out of these treasures you may bring forth things, new and old; so that "your speech may be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may minister grace to the hearers." Having learned from such a teacher, your lips, like those of the righteous, should be as a well of life, to convey saving instruction to others.

For, "to him that hath, to good purpose, shall be given; so that he shall have more abundantly." Who has not seen the fructifying influence of usefulness? It is impossible to labour for the benefit of others without improving ourselves. By teaching, we learn. We are compelled to call up to distinct recollection, our own principles, in every attempt to commend them to the ignorant or erroneous; and at the same time, our attachment to them is fortified, by the very arguments we employ to impress them on the alienated mind. This is the law of the divine government, which honours and rewards every grateful return we make for favours received.

And what claims has our Divine Benefactor on the gratitude of our hearts and the benevolent labours of our lives! Things that were hidden from all antiquity, are revealed to us. Prophets and kings, who panted for our privileges, died without them. That which, to others, is hidden under the veil of parables, is, by the same means, made more plain to us. Taught of God to penetrate into the interior sense, our imagination aids our faith; and the similitudes which earth affords, lead us to heaven. Though we have yet much to learn; if we seek to lead others into the mysteries of the kingdom of God, we become better acquainted with them ourselves. Thus we bring out of our treasures things new to ourselves; while we prevent those which are old from becoming obsolete, or forgotten. Benefactors to others, by producing for use, what they need, we learn our own mercies, and become daily more "rich towards God."

LECTURE XIII.

CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE.

Јони 35-59.

THE typical, or allegorical strain of preaching, is often censured by men of classical taste; but it is founded in nature, and those who most despise it, fall into it whenever they become earnest and impassioned. For what else is the figurative language of the orator, or the poet, but a similar employment of the analogies of nature, and an effort to render the imagination subservient to the improvement of the understanding and the heart? To a typical discourse of our Lord, on the Manna which fed Israel in the Desert, we have now to listen. For, after exhibiting the brazen serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness, as a type of the Saviour hanging upon the cross, it would have been surprising if he had not made a similar use of that most striking dispensation, by which Jehovah fed a whole nation, for forty years, with bread from heaven. The occasion was afforded by the miracle Christ had just wrought, the feeding of five thousand persons with a few loaves and fishes. What mind, imbued with scriptural knowledge and ideas, could have witnessed that miracle without thinking of the manna in the desert? But the specific application of this to Christ himself, as the bread of life, we owe entirely to our Divine Teacher.

I. See the Divine bounty displayed in the gift of living bread.

The miracle having so transported the multitude that they would have taken Christ by force, to make him a king, he sent away his disciples, by ship, across the lake, and ascended to a mountain, to spend the night in prayer. Coming

down before the dawn, he crossed the lake, walking on the water, while the crowd was waiting, in expectation of seeing him descend in the morning. Having gone to Capernaum in quest of him, and found him on the other side of the lake, they exclaimed, "When camest thou here?" He, far from parading his miracle, told them, that, with all their zeal, they sought him, only because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled. Thus he opened this discourse, by saying, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth," as you have now done to find me, because I fed you; but labour for that "which endureth to eternal life." Here let us consider,

1. The parallel between Christ and the manna.

Moses describes the literal manna thus:* "And when the dew that lay, was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost, on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, This is manna; for they wist not what it was. But Moses said, This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat."

This was a free gift of God, without human labour. Gratuitous origin is, in the opinion of some, expressed by the name manna, given to the type, which sets forth Christ, God's free gift to those who could never have deserved such a blessing. The Jews boasted that Moses gave them bread from heaven; and Christ says, "The bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world." Our Saviour's human nature, indeed, came not from heaven, but it is so intimately united to the divine, that the properties of the one are ascribed to the other, just as our bodies and souls, by their union in one person, are often spoken of, as if they borrowed each other's properties. Christ, therefore, says to the Jews, "What if you should see the Son of man ascend up, where he was before?" Though it was only as Son of God, that he was in heaven before. By miracle the manna was given; and a distinguished Jewish Rabbi says,

^{*} Exod. xvi. 14.

" Of all the miracles Moses wrought, this was the greatest." It is probable that the manna was formed in the air; for, whatever may be said of the article of commerce called manna, and of its production as a gum, on the trees in the desert of Arabia; we cannot suppose that there was any such quantity of that substance as would feed two millions of people, for forty years. The Scriptures, unquestionably, exhibit a miraculous production. Nor is it less true, that, by a miracle, we are blessed with Christ, the heavenly bread. To his virgin mother, the angel said, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." When Omnipotence caused the air, or the dew, in the desert, to concrete and form into solid grains, that fell around the tents of Israel, Moses said, it was to teach them, "that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God;" that is, what God pleases to appoint becomes our nourishment. The redemption of Christ flows from the counsels of the eternal mind, and the love of Jehovah's heart, "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." By his good pleasure we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ." As, therefore, the manna given in pure mercy, to a starving nation, saved them from death, and as we call bread, the staff of life; such was God's love to ruined man, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have eternal life?" Again, as the manna thus given was the means of sustaining the temporal life of the Jews, so Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, is the original principle and spring of all spiritual and divine life; the cause of all performance and increase of good works, and the only fountain of spiritual enjoyment, and enduring satisfaction. Bringing in the everlasting righteousness, he becomes the food which endureth to endless life, in opposition to that which perisheth.

Thus far, the Scriptures seem to assert; but some love to

carry the parallels between types and their antitypes, as far as they can. These I would advise to beware of indulging the imagination, without the aid of a scriptural guide; while I would say to their censors, "Condemn not too severely that which is substantially true, and may be a source of pious edification and delight." The manna then, was given to murmuring Israelites, and Christ, to sinful men. The figure of the manna has been compared to that of a pearl, and Christ is, to every discerning eye, pure and lovely, as the pearl of great price. The taste of the manna was like that of honey, while the Jews say that it assumed all flavours, was to the babe like milk, and to the full grown man as strong meat; so Christ is "to you that believe, precious," sweeter than honey from the comb, affording to every stage of religion appropriate blessings, "grace to help in time of need." The manna descended in the desert, on the outside of the camp; and we are invited to "go forth to Christ, without the camp, bearing his reproach." It was with the first dew of the morning, that the manna fell, and the first dawn of mercy to fallen man, was the promise of the "seed of the woman." The manna was given daily; and Christ is, to believers, their daily bread. Manna was not seen on the ground, during the sabbath, and Christ was hidden in the grave during the Jewish sabbath. The manna was given in the desert, without ploughing and sowing, though it was necessary to gather it; and Christ is the free gift of God, "without money and without price," but we must go to him, and receive him by faith. Each Israelite received a certain given quantity of the manna; and "to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." If the manna was received and retained contrary to God's order, it corrupted; and they who receive not Christ aright, nor improve him for their eternal salvation, find condemnation in him. The manna lasted through the desert, but ceased to descend when Israel entered into Canaan; and though Christ will supply all our need, until death, we shall not need the same application of his redemption when we arrive in heaven, where there is no sin, and we

"shall hunger no more." Yet, a portion of manna was gathered and deposited in a golden urn, and laid up in the ark, in the holy of holies, for a perpetual memorial; and Christ will be seen in the heaven, where he says, "I will give to him that overcometh, to eat of the hidden manna." But, with all its worth, some loathed the heavenly bread as light food, and were bitten of the fiery serpents. Beware, then, lest you despise God's best gift, for "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

2. Behold the superiority of Christ, the antitype, over the

type.

The Jews boasted of what Moses gave, as if he were better to them than Christ; but our Lord shows that all other food perisheth, while he gives nourishment to everlasting life. He had said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoso drinketh of this water, shall thirst again; but whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." The Jews were reminded that their fathers ate manna, and were dead; this is the true bread of life, "that a man may eat thereof, and never die." Never shall they know the bitter taste of death, eternal death, who by faith feed on Christ. It was not Moses that gave to Israel the manna; he was but the ostensible donor, a mere steward, distributing the bounty of another; but it is truly the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave us this bread. Manna did not, literally, come from heaven, but from the air, or the clouds: while Christ was from the bosom of the Father. The manna gave life to a nation; but Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and saves his church out of every nation, tribe, and tongue. The generation that fed on manna fell by the stroke of wrath, in the wilderness; but the church, that feeds on Christ, lives by the love and favour of God, for ever. The manna was loathed by the ungrateful people to whom it was given, but Christ gives everlasting satisfaction to all those that truly feed on him. The manna, therefore, showed that it sustained only the inferior life of the body; but Christ nourishes the soul, and feeds the life of God within us.

The manna carried not its effects beyond the wilderness, nor to those who died in it, gave any bodily advantage beyond this life; but Christ says, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." Our bodies, as well as our souls, shall be eternally nourished, and enjoy immortal life, through feeding on Christ, for he will raise us up incorruptible, at the last day.

This high superiority of the true bread from heaven, on which we now feed, as we pass through this wilderness, should fire our souls with glorious anticipations, and our very flesh should exult in hope. The blood that is chilled with age should grow warm again, and pour a more joyful tide through our veins, making our hearts throb with new life, our eyes flash with fresh fires, and the shrivelled lips of age sing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. The way in which we partake of this heavenly manna.

There is nothing more mysterious than the operation of food and drink on our mortal frame. That water should turn into the precious vital flood, the purple tide that flows through every vein and every artery; and that the dead substances, chiefly vegetable, which we take in for food, should be animalized, acquire vitality, and become integral parts of a living being, is a theme of wonder and research for the best instructed chemist, physiologist, anatomist, or physician. But, analogous to this, there is an operation of the soul, which is as much more wondrous, as it is more important. For Christ says, " My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed; he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life: except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. For as the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me shall live by me."* Expressions so reiterated, or

rather so varied, were doubtless designed to teach us, not only a real, but a vital truth. The question, then, is, how do we feed on Christ, the bread that comes down from heaven? The church of Rome, professing to take the words which Christ uttered at the institution of the Lord's supper, literally, insists, that the bread is transubstantiated and turned into Christ's flesh, and the wine into his blood; and that we thus eat of him literally. But Christ could not have intended this, when he said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, ye have no life in you;" for the last supper was not then instituted; and it was, therefore, not possible, that men should thus have had life. And, now, the bread in the Lord's supper, is even after consecration, manifestly the same corruptible substance, as before; while Christ has no more such a body as we now possess; for, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." To the Jews, Christ said, "it is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." He has himself, explained his own words; for when he said, Labour for immortal food, and they asked, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God? he answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he has sent; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst; every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath eternal life."

The food and drink we take, pass, in the process of assimilation, through the various states of chyme, chyle, and blood, and so the life of the body is sustained, by an operation of the chemistry of nature. But when we believe on the Son of God, who was sacrificed for us, we pass from death to life. This is an operation that our faith, rather than our sense, recognises; as, indeed, the most secret transformation of our

reason for concluding that the preposition with the accusative, signifies, as when the genitive follows, "by means of." Our Lord may well be supposed to say, that the source may be known by the end, or design of our life. "The living Father sent me, and I live for him; so he that lives, by eating me, lives for me."

bodily food, is believed rather than known. The consequence of our taking food, we feel; for our sinking body or drooping spirits, revive and become vigorous and cheerful; and so does the soul that, having been united to Christ, by a living faith obtains "justification of life." We lose then the gloom and depression of guilt, and become strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." "Truth," says one, "is the food of the mind;" and when applied to the truth of Christ's incarnation and sacrifice for us, and our everlasting life through him, this is true indeed.

The food and drink that we receive by the body, become a part of ourselves, so that we cannot separate, or distinguish them; and the Saviour, received by faith, becomes one with us, and we are one with him, "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church." All union, or identity, is involved in mystery; but we feel that, feeding on Christ, daily, by faith, we are united to him; his sentiments are ours; we have a sympathy of soul, having fellowship with him in his sufferings and joys; and have one love, one hatred, one hope, one aim, one end. For he that feeds on a crucified Saviour hates sin as Christ did, when he suffered for it; loves God, as Jesus did, when he sacrificed himself to the divine glory; and loves the Church, as he did, when "he gave himself for it, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."

II. The sovereignty of Divine influences, is displayed in the efficacy of this gift.

Notwithstanding all the truth and beauty and glory that a believer finds in this divine discourse, we do not wonder that carnal men, who "understand not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to them," should have exclaimed, "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" The ancient heathers stumbled, in like manner, and supposed that Christians ate human flesh, in their banquets. Christ said, indeed, "Does this offend you?

what, if you should see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" It will then appear more difficult for me to give you my flesh to eat. But, "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." As, therefore, we have already beheld the Father's love in giving us this bread from heaven, and the love of Christ, in "giving his flesh for the life of the world;" so we now must learn—the necessity of the influences of the Holy Spirit, to give effect to the heavenly manna—and the discrimination which these influences make between one man and another.

1. The necessity of Divine influences. "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him."

Such was Christ's reply to those who murmured, because he affirmed, "he came down from heaven;" while they said, "We know his father and mother; then how can he say, I came down from heaven?" So foolish is heavenly wisdom, and so wise is human folly, in the eyes of all who are not enlightened by grace. There is what the Scripture calls a blindness of heart, which is a strange compound of ignorance and alienation. This answers the common question, " How can we be blamed, if we cannot come, except the Father draw us?" For this is a moral, in distinction from a physical, inability. Moral inability, is that which is blameable; and physical, that which is innocent. The free, and frequent use of these proper terms may render them, at length, intelligible, even to the simplest minds. Moral inability, is one that arises from a bad moral state; as the drunkard is unable to resist the temptation to liquor, because his own moral state is bad; though a temperate man, is very well able to resist. The lewd are said to have "eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin;" and "how can ye believe," says Christ, "who receive honour, one from another?" Some may say, this is rather unwillingness than inability; and to this we readily consent; for, on another occasion, Christ says, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." But then, it is a real inability, too; for no man can, in such a state of mind, come to Christ; and no lewd, drunken, proud man, can, in these states of mind, be chaste, sober, or amiable, any more than a man can see without eyes. But the inability, being moral, is blameable; while a physical incapacity makes us innocent. Every one sees that he who is so given to intoxication that he cannot keep sober, is not to be excused, but blamed for his inability; while he that is unable to see because he is blind, is not to be censured, if he does not see. If we cannot come to Christ, it is because we are so sinful and blameable, that we should be covered with shame, for it; and if we ever come we shall reproach ourselves for not coming before, and see that all our inability was a sinful disinclination.

Who shall remedy this evil? None but God; for he only can save a man from himself. This is here ascribed to the Father; for he gives the Holy Spirit, whose influences change the mind. By conferring another disposition, he makes a man able, because willing, to come to Christ. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

This is called "drawing,"* in distinction from dragging, or driving, or carrying; because the operation of Divine influence on the mind accords with its rational and accountable nature. Grace acts both in a way of instruction, that seems

* Augustine in locum, illustrates this expression, by quoting Virgil's line :

Trahit sua quemque voluptas.

" Each one is drawn by his own peculiar taste."

"It is not necessity, but pleasure; not compulsion, but delight. Have the senses of the body their pleasures, and is the mind destitute of its pleasures? You show a green branch to the sheep, and you draw it. Nuts are shown to children, and they are attracted. Whither we run, we are drawn; for it is by love we are drawn. The body is drawn, without hurting it; for, by the cords of the heart it is drawn. His own peculiar pleasure draws each one. And does not Christ, revealed by the Father, draw?" Thus, Herodotus represents Homer, drawing the Cumæans, by reading to them his poem. Luther says, "as a man allures others, by his humanity, to converse with him; God allures us, by his philanthropy. For terror repels, but love attracts. God is set before us, as our dearest friend, so loving us, as to give his only begotten Son for us. Thus he draws us."

like the spontaneous operation of a person's own reasonings, and in a way of persuasive attraction, that looks like the mere voluntary change of his own resolutions: drawn, by what are called "cords of love and bonds of a man," the effect inevitably follows; for "every one that has thus learned and received of the Father, comes to Christ." This our Lord identifies with eating of him, saying, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger." To be filled, is the effect of eating, rather than coming to eat. But it is our Saviour's manner, by interchanging figures, to make one throw light on another.

2. The sovereignty of these influences our Lord asserts.

Instead of expressing any thing arbitrarily cruel; sovereignty means something arbitrarily kind. When the king punishes, he acts merely as the executive power, performing what the law pronounced; but when he acts as the sovereign, according to his own will, it is to pardon and to free from death; to bestow pensions, or other favours, which could not be claimed. Thus God's sovereign grace and influence confer on sinners undeserved favours.

That some do come to Christ we happily have experimental proof; and that all whom the Father gave to him shall come, we are here assured. He says, "I shall lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day." But we have seen, that, owing to a guilty cause, none can come, except the Father draw him. Every one, therefore, that comes, owes it, not to his own good inclination, but to gracious attraction, which changes him, and makes him "willing, in the day of Divine power." This, therefore, at once proves to us, that Christ's sacrifice shall have effect, and encourages us, in coming to him, with the assurance that we shall in no wise be cast out. To what can be ascribed this fact that we come? Because the Father draws. And why does he draw? Because it is his will, that Christ shall lose none of those that are given to him. Is it possible then, that Christ should counteract his Father's attraction, and reject those whom he has drawn? No, "he will in no wise cast them out." The hungry soul, therefore, that comes, to obtain the bread of life, is assured that he may freely eat; for ye were all taught of God, for

this purpose, that, having learned and received of the Father, ye should come to Christ, and find living bread, immortal food.

"But there were some that believed not; for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not."

Their own depravity made them unable to believe, and God is not bound to cure our depravity; for if he were, there could be no punishment for sin, and, in effect, no moral government. When, therefore, he by the drawing of the Spirit, does overcome, we see that sovereign grace has made us to differ, and we must say, "not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name we give glory." This "grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Sovereign grace gave us Christ, the bread from heaven, when no such gift was afforded to the fallen angels; grace gives us life, when we feed on Christ by faith; and the same grace draws us to him, to eat of the living bread.

With what earnestness, then, should I repeat the words of my Lord; "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to eternal life, which the Son shall give you; for him has God the Father sealed!" "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Why all this eagerness for perishing things, "rising early, and sitting up late, eating the bread of carefulness," for food that will quickly leave you to droop and die, and go away to a state of existence where all this provision, about which you are so anxious, will avail you nothing? What! not bestow one thought on that soul, which shall survive this dying body! Never reflect that the immortal mind must be nourished too; and that, if it be left destitute of its needful food, it must sink, and droop, and die, as far as souls can die, that is, fall into gloom and depression, and sense of emptiness, wretchedness, and despair! What though your soul now lies buried, as in a living sepulchre, while the body engrosses all your care; it will, when you drop the body, be left to feel its destitution and misery. Passing into a world, for which it is unprepared, it will find itself doomed to live for ever without its

proper life, the favour and love and enjoyment of God! How bitter will be its reproaches, when it turns upon you; and conscience shall be as a worm that never dies, inflicting torment, unutterable in kind, and eternal in duration!

"Labour, then, for that meat which endureth to eternal life." For, whatever sacrifice it may require, it will well repay. Whatever victory over sloth, and love of ease, and worldly pleasure, or gain, a just concern for the soul may demand; can anything be too much for that which, if lost, is lost to all eternity? Should we not derive wisdom, even from our own folly; and from all that we have done for the bread that perisheth, learn what we should do for that which will save us from perishing? For we grant that our Lord says, " strive to enter into the strait gate;" and this great affair demands such decision of soul, that we should be willing to do any thing, or suffer any thing, to go through fire, or through water, that we may obtain the bread of heaven. Yet it is given freely, without money and without price. No price could equal it, and therefore it is given away, by the Son of man. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The seal of heaven is set upon him, as appointed of the Father to give life, and that impression of Divinity that was seen when he fed hungry bodies, shows that he is the life of souls.* Come, then, to him, and receive from him provision more miraculous, and more gracious than that with which he fed starving thousands in the desert. Be assured that he will not reject you; for he came down from heaven, that he might "give his flesh for the life of the world."

- 2. With what appetite should believers feed on this living bread, that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- * Herodotus says that the Egyptian priests examined the victims presented for sacrifice, and if they were found free from blemish, a mark was set on their horns, and by clay, stamped with a seal, they were exhibited as fit to be offered. The modern Jews mark, with a ticket of lead, the meat which they consider fit to be eaten. Christ here speaks of himself as sealed by the Father, to be such a sacrifice as shall be our food.

If Israel after the flesh, said, "Our souls loathe this light food," the true Israel should say, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." The dearest interest of our souls demands that we should, by hourly meditation and daily prayer, feed our minds with this living food. "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." To this we should add the devotional reading of Scripture, which reveals Christ and contains the offer of this food, and that promise of eternal life which authorises us to eat of it. They who pass through life in this exercise of faith, find that there is a divine reality in what is called eating of Christ; and they say of those Scriptures which make him known, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy words were to me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart."

In proportion as we are fed by this bread we shall become

In proportion as we are fed by this bread we shall become like Christ, and be anxious to prove that we are one with him and his people, by a readiness to give our bread to the hungry, and especially to the household of faith; for "if a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and we give them not the things needful for the body, how dwelleth the love of God in us?" If we are unfaithful stewards of the inferior blessings, how shall our heavenly Father give us the true riches? All our life and conversation must show that we feed on Christ; that we are made partakers of his truth, his benevolence, and his purity. For they who live in hatred, selfishness, pride, luxury, and sinful lusts, prove that they have taken poison to their souls; while only those who live as Christ lived have a right to say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

3. How dear should the supper of the Lord be to those who live on him by faith!

For though we have seen that it was not of this that our Lord spoke in the sermon on the living bread, since the upper was not then instituted; yet it is plain that he gave us this sacred feast to enforce these truths here taught. We should, therefore, most gladly "do this in remembrance of him," who gave his body to be broken for us, and his blood to be shed for our sins. The literal bread is set before us, to assist us to eat of the spiritual; and the fruit of the vine is put into our hands, that we may be aided to drink of that fruit of the true vine, the blood of atonement, "shed for the remission of our sins." We feel that Christ's "flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed," and that we live by partaking of this great salvation. Who, then, would not gladly avail himself of such an institution, so divine, so calculated to promote our participation of Christ? Had this been a device of our own, we could not have expected benefit from it; but as it is an ordinance of God, it has the seal of the Divine blessing, and becomes itself a seal to us of Christ's grace, and of our partaking of it. Those who thus celebrate the supper, find that it was not instituted in vain. Coming to this table hungry, we go away, saying, "Thou fillest the hungry with good things." From this feast we shall go to a higher; "for to him that overcometh," says Christ, "I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God, and of the hidden manna." To eternity our religion will be sustained by the grace of Christ; for we have no principle of perpetuity in ourselves. The contemplation of the Divine attributes, displayed and honoured in Christ, will be an immortal feast to ransomed, illuminated, sanctified, and glorified spirits.

LECTURE XIV.

ON TRADITIONS AND RITUAL OBSERVANCES.

MATT. XV. 1-20. MARK vii. 1-23.

THE Scriptures, being designed for all nations, in all ages, contain many things that, being of temporal or local application, are not equally understood, or needed, in every place, or every age. But an enlarged knowledge of the world unfolds the truth and value of these things, just where ignorance would slight or despise them. The question of traditions, which excites little interest in our protestant country, is, in a large part of what is called Christendom, regarded as an affair of vital importance. That which virtually nullifies the Scriptures, should awaken our attention when it is fairly brought before us in the Divine word, as it is to-day. We are accustomed to view our Saviour as the patron of all that is holy in heart or life; but we see him now accused of impiety. He defends himself, however, in such a spirit as affords us an influential example for our conduct, whenever we, like him, are charged with violating our duty and shocking the religious sense of those among whom we dwell.

I. The statement of the case.

Seeing Christ sit down to meat with what is called, in the original, common hands, explained by the Evangelist to mean unwashed, the Pharisees murmured; for they eat not, except they wash often, as our translators render it; but it should be rendered "up to the elbow."* This is said to

^{*} Πυγμη signifies both the fist or clenched hand, and the cubit or forearm. Pigmies, a word derived from this, were supposed to be men a cubit, or a foot and a half, high. That our translation of Mark is wrong, every attentive reader must see; for we cannot suppose that the Pharisees are said to wash often before meat, though the Vulgate has led the way to

be a tradition of the elders, in distinction from the precepts of the law of Moses. "And when they come from the markets or public places of resort, they do not eat till they have washed," or baptised, as the original expression is, showing that baptism is used, not as the washing of the whole body, but of a part, i. e. the hands. Other things, also, as pots, and cups, and brass vessels, and tables, they washed or baptized; for a sacred ablution was the idea conveyed by baptism. All this was designed to remove whatever defilement might have been contracted by intercourse with Gentiles, or unclean persons, or things pronounced unclean by the law. For this reason, the Jews attached great value to a residence in the Holy Land, where they were not exposed to contact with the heathen. The Gemara says, "Whoever lives in the land of Israel, eats his common meals in cleanness, speaks the holy tongue, says over his phylacteries morning and evening: only that man may be confident that he shall obtain the life of the world to come."

Our Saviour paid the utmost deference to the law of God, worshipping at the temple, keeping the passover, and submitting to John's baptism, saying, "thus it behoveth us to fulfil all righteousness;" but he utterly disregarded the oral traditions, permitting his disciples to pluck and eat the ears of corn on the sabbath, and working miracles on that day, contrary to what the Jews thought lawful. This is a question of morals that requires much care and delicate attention to our motives. For, in some cases, it is a great duty not to act upon our own views, to the utter disregard of other men's scruples, or even errors. Paul "took Timothy and circum-

this error, probably by mistaking the word in the text of Mark for $\pi\nu\nu\nu$. Campbell thinks that it should be rendered, "a little water," that is, a handful. But he derives this from fist, and he would not have liked to say fist-ful, since the fist can hold nothing; though he supposes that the word means a certain quantity, as we call a certain measure a cubit. Besides, the idea of a little water does not accord, either with the practice of the Jews, or the genius of this passage of Scripture, which designs to express superabundant washing. The most natural idea is, that they washed cubitally, if we may so speak, that is, up to the elbow. This view of the original is taken by Diodati, whose words are, "fino al cubito."

cised him, because all the Jews of that part knew that his father was a Greek." He said, "if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more meat while the world stands." Christ said, "though, as the Son of God, I am free from the law of taxation, yet, lest we should offend, go, Peter, to the sea, and take thereout the fish that contains the tributemoney." Yet Timothy was not compelled to be circumcised; and Paul said to the Galatians, "I testify to every man that is circumcised, that Christ shall profit him nothing." And when Peter withdrew from the Gentiles to eat only such things as the Jews deemed lawful, "Paul withstood him to the face." For when a person, who believes in Christ alone for salvation, has scruples, we should respect them for his sake, and not hurt his mind by carrying our own liberty to all its lengths. But when certain observances are set up in opposition to God's truth, and are made substitutes for Christ, then we should "not give place by subjection to them, no not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel may continue with men." Such was Christ's design in setting these traditions at defiance, as we shall shortly see.

Our Redeemer was interrogated concerning the conduct of his disciples. Matt. xv. 2. "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?"

As the master will be called in question for the actions of his disciples, "ought you not to walk circumspectly, because of the reproach of the heathen, our enemies?" It will be presumed, that the disciples of such a master will do nothing but what he approves, and our Lord suffered his disregard of the tradition of the Pharisees to appear on all occasions, that it might elicit inquiries, and thus diffuse information.

The Pharisees seized this opportunity to condemn Christ and destroy his credit with the people. It was well, however, that they did not go away and blaze abroad their reproaches, without inquiring; for if men would always investigate, before they condemn, many calumnies would be suppressed, as serpents crushed in their nest. Often should we find that what appeared to us indefensible was founded on sufficient reasons, and what shocked us as a crime ought

rather to delight us as a virtue. To the Pharisees we should, in this instance, award the honour conferred by imitation. By the previous inquiries which Israel on one occasion instituted, they were saved from a civil war.*

Let us now hear,

II. The decision of the judge.

Our Lord does not shrink from the question, nor act as the parents of the blind man, saying, "he is of age, ask him; he shall answer for himself." Our advocate pleads our cause against all accusers. Let us be found in his company, listening to his instructions, obeying his commands, and trusting to his friendship; and we may say "he is near that justifieth me; who shall condemn me?"

1. As mere commandments of men, traditions are condemned.

In support of this charge, Christ quotes prophecy, saying, "well hath Isaiah prophesied of you, hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." For the affairs of this life, and the conduct of civil society, God has ordained magistrates, and charged us to "obey every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake;" so that when we defer to this divine institution, we obey, not from mere dread of wrath, or human punishment, but "for conscience towards God." In religion, however, God fills the throne, never parts with the sceptre, nor gives to man a right to command. Religion is so much an affair of the heart, and belongs so exclusively to the empire of mind, that none but God is competent to rule in the church, which is called the kingdom or reign of God, and a heavenly kingdom. Here God has, in all ages, maintained a holy jealousy, and has suffered no man to legislate. It was by faith that Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, presenting the firstlings of his flock, in deference to the revelation of God's will concerning the types of the promised Saviour. Cain, disregarding this, and

^{*} Joshua xxii.

presenting only the fruits of the ground, was rejected. The laws of Moses were stamped with divine authority, and bound the whole nation, kings and priests as well as people. All were charged to study it with diligent care, and not to turn aside from it, to the right hand or to the left. The kings were commanded to write out a copy of the law; and when Uzzah attempted to intrude into the priest's office, and to burn incense, he was smitten with leprosy, and shut out from the government and from society, for life. The alterations that David made in the worship of the sanctuary were by the authority of divine inspiration, given him as a prophet; and to this, Solomon was charged to conform, though he also was inspired to write some parts of the word of God.

As Moses was a faithful servant over the house of that God who said, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee on the mount," so was Christ, "faithful as a son, over all his house," which was the church of God. The Apostles were furnished by the words of Christ, and the inspiration of the Spirit, with all things that pertained to the kingdom of Christ, and were empowered to bind or loose, to give laws or leave us at liberty. By their word, we separate the first day, as the Lord's day, above all the other days of the week. Other days have not only no peculiar sanctity to commend them to our conscience, but duty to God compels us to reject and refuse all appearance of deference to them, because they have nothing to recommend them but the commandment of man; and this is, not only of no force in religion, but it is a sin to yield deference to such authority. Who but God can make that holy, or sacred, that was not so before? The faithful servant of God is bound to show that he does not suffer man to seat himself in his maker's throne, and assume an authority that belongs only to the author of our time, the sovereign of religion, the Lord of souls.

It is, however, asked, do we not obey man, when we meet at a fixed hour for public worship, and at a given number of times, and observe a certain order of prayers and praise and sacred readings, or preaching? We answer, "He who charged us to give ourselves, first to the Lord, and then to the church, according to the will of God; and not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together," commanded us also to "do all things to edification," to study "the things that make for peace, and the things whereby one may edify another." He has bound us, therefore, to agree with our Christian brethren in establishing an order that shall be for general edification. The church oversteps its authority when it enjoins any laws that Christ has not made, and enacts any other regulations than those which are found to be for the general good. Where Christ has left us at liberty, no man has a right to bind. Whatever worship we profess, or intend, to pay to God by these human inventions, we lose our aim, for God says, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men."

But some may ask, does not the New Testament sanction traditions? and Paul say, "Hold the traditions that ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle?"* This does not apply to the case before us; for we are here considering things that were never given by men divinely inspired to regulate the church, as the Apostles were. The origin of the Pharisaic traditions was false. They did, indeed, pretend to have derived them from the ministry of Moses; for the folio volumes of traditions which are now called the Mishna, or second law, are said to have been given by Moses verbally, as an exposition of the written law. But Christ denies this, and says they are not commandments of God, but of man. Again, the Apostle speaks of traditions, by letter, as well as by word. What comes to us from the Apostles, by means of their epistles, we receive as the commandments of Christ. But the Church of Rome, taking a lesson from the Jewish Mishna, pretends to the possession of unwritten traditions, things handed down verbally from the Apostles. Of this we have a right to demand the proofs. Judging from the whole strain of the New Testament, and from analogy with the conduct of God towards the Jews, as exhibited in this

passage, we should conclude, that whatever the Apostles delivered verbally to the churches, they left on record in the New Testament, to which, therefore, we are forbidden to make additions. "If any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book." We find in the New Testament that which throws suspicion on unwritten traditions; for though it seemed to come from the disciples who heard our Lord himself, and from them it went abroad among Christians, that John should never die; "yet Jesus did not say to him he shall not die."* After reading this, who can give credit to traditions, however high the origin that they may boast? There is, indeed, one saying of our Lord, quoted by Paul, "That it is more blessed to give than to receive." This is no longer an unwritten tradition to us, for it is recorded in Scripture; and if it were not, it could claim no authority.

2. Traditions are condemned as contradicting the commandments of God.

The Pharisees asked, "Why the disciples ate with unwashed hands, contrary to the commands of the elders;" and Jesus asked in his turn, "Why do ye transgress the command of God by your tradition?" For Moses commanded you to honour your father and mother, and to put to death those who reviled them; but you allow a man to take that which should have supported his parents, and to devote it to the service of the temple, and then to say to his father and mother, that part of my property which I might have given to you, is Corban, a sacred gift. This was a virtual abrogation of the fifth commandment; and it is difficult to suppose that such a tradition could have been introduced, or sanctioned, by any other than the mercenary motive of profiting by such offerings to the temple. For who does not see that, in this way, the law of God is set aside by a comment of men? For a man might, in a rage against his parents, say, " I will give every thing that you could have claimed from me to the temple, and then you must starve." If we honour our parents, we must be ready to act accordingly, and support them, if they

have need, and we have ability. Christ, therefore, charges the Pharisees with "setting aside the commandments of God, to hold the traditions of men." This is the invariable consequence of introducing human authority in religion. It first shares, and then supersedes, the authority of the Divine word. In those countries where Saints' days are kept sacred, the Lord's day is grossly violated; and where superstition flourishes, religion perishes. There is more sin committed in those that are called holy days, than in all the rest of the year. Jehovah is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another. Where men pretend to partnership with him in the throne, and claim to rule in the church, and over conscience, his empire, he indignantly withdraws, and leaves us to our traditions, with which he will have nothing to do. For it would be an insult to him to hold that divided authority, which is attempted to be forced upon him, when human traditions are introduced into religion. It is a fearful, but just judgment that leaves men to their own devices.

In countries where traditions reign, the word of God is scarcely known. The legends of the saints may be everywhere seen, but a Bible could not be found. Priests, as well as people, are ignorant of what is written by inspiration, while unwritten traditions fill every mind. Superstitious rites, which God never enjoined, are carefully practised, amidst the most shameful violation of divine commands. Let us flee, then, from this sin; and banish from the church those superstitions that would banish the Scriptures.

3. Traditions are charged with conveying a false idea of religion.

From the Pharisees, with whom he had been disputing, Christ turns away; and calls the multitude to him, saying, "Hear and understand. It is not that which entereth into a man that can defile him." At first sight, this appears contrary to the law of Moses, which forbade various kinds of food in air, earth, or seas, as abominable. The Jews thought, that if such things entered into them, moral pollution was contracted by the mere physical contact. Yet Christ's declaration was virtually republished, from heaven, to induce Peter

to go to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, and to eat with him, at whose table would be found such things as a Jew deemed unclean. For all sorts of things appeared to be let down from heaven, and a voice said, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." He replied, "Not so, Lord; for nothing common, or unclean, hath at any time entered into my mouth." But the oracle said, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." As to washing before meat, one of the rabbis said, "The sin of whoredom was not so great as the neglect of this, which was a crime to be avoided more than death."

How false were these views of religion! The same God that created the things that were allowed, created also those that were prohibited. Before the law was given on Sinai, the people of God were allowed to do many things that were afterwards forbidden. There were peculiar reasons for prohibiting certain meats. Some of them are unwholesome in hot climates, where it is supposed that swine's flesh generates leprosy, a dreadful disease to which the inhabitants of Palestine were disposed. Some of these meats were forbidden, in order also to teach abhorrence of the habits of certain animals, as the swine, proverbial for great uncleanness, and the dog, which is eaten in some countries, but was forbidden to the Jews. The levitical prohibitions had also a typical reference; blood was not to be eaten, because the blood was the life of the animal. "It is given to make atonement for your souls," says God; "ye shall pour it out at the foot of my altar." "But the law of commandments contained in ordinances, touch not, taste not, handle not, was taken out of the way, "being nailed to the cross," when Christ died to fulfil the law. So deeply were the Jews, however, imbued with the notion that there was some moral pollution in certain meats, that they deemed it an essential part of religion to keep clear from ceremonial After the distinction of meats was abolished, defilement. Peter was even reproved by another Apostle, for appearing to sanction the Jewish obstinacy of attachment to the abrogated ritual.

But when the authority of God no longer interposes, these

distinctions become mere tradition. The rule now is, "meat commendeth us not to God; for neither, if we eat, are we the better; nor if we eat not, are we the worse." "The kingdom of God is not meats and drinks; but every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." To place religion in rites and ceremonies, is to contradict the whole genius of divine revelation, which always taught that the soul, rather than the body, is the seat of religion, and that the essence of it lies in love to God and love to man. "Circumcision was nothing but keeping the commandment of God; and distinction of meats was nothing, except an act of submission to his authority who chose thus to convey moral instruction to the mind.

But, if there is no real pollution in certain meats, or in eating with unwashen hands, there is in certain states of mind, and consequently in such actions as flow from a wrong disposition of heart. "Not what enters into a man, but what comes from him, defiles him." This aphorism, however, so shocked the superstitious minds of the Pharisees, that the disciples, anxious for their master's credit, and partaking, perhaps, in some degree of the Pharisaic temper, said to him, "Knowest thou that they were offended at this saying?" Our Redeemer, far from being alarmed at their displeasure, took this opportunity of expressing his disapprobation of their whole sect. "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

The Jews were divided into sects, of which the Sadducees and Pharisees were the chief, and the last most highly esteemed, as containing almost all that was good in the nation. But God never instituted such distinctions. He made one church, and every division was contrary to his design. The Christian Church, also, was, at first, one body; and all separation into sects is an evil. When the restoration of original purity shall have destroyed all sectarian divisions, the prayer of Christ will be answered, "That they all may be

one, as thou Father art in me, and I am in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

The sect of the Pharisees, therefore, that valued itself so highly on its ceremonial strictness, and reduced religion to ritual observances, was a plant which our heavenly Father had not planted, and, having never formed this distinction in the people of Israel, determined to root it up, which he did when the nation was crushed and dispersed by the Romans. The sanctimonious pretenders to extraordinary purity, being themselves blinded to the true nature of religion and to the glory of Christ, made the people blind with admiration of human merits, till both the leaders and those who were led by them, fell into the ditch of destruction. "The stone which these builders refused, made the head of the corner," fell with just vengeance on the whole nation, and ground it to powder, so that all the distinction of sects was lost. The religion of the modern Jews is, indeed, very much in accordance with that of the ancient Pharisees; but that name, or sect, no longer exists among them. God has determined to destroy all that religion which has not emanated from his own wisdom and authority. Let us, then, see that we plant no other plants, nor set up sects, or forms, or rites, the devices of our own hearts; for God will assuredly root them up. Fair and flourishing they may appear for awhile. What is called Catholicism, is the sect of the Christian Pharisees, and once it seemed, like Nebuchadnezzar, "a tree whose height reached unto heaven, and its sight to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much; and in it was meat for all." But the decree has gone forth, " hew down the tree, and cut off its branches; shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit."* God "shall destroy that wicked one, with the Spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming." "Has he spoken, and shall he not do it?" Let all sects and parties in Christianity take warning. The spirit of Pharisaism is separation; for the name signifies that which was condemned by Isaiah, "Stand by; I am more holy than thou." In proportion as we separate from other Christians, we bear marks of a plant which Christ never planted. He designed that all his disciples should be one; and they who give best proofs of being plants of his own right hand planting, are those who most avoid the spirit of separation, and most cordially say, in their practice, as well as by their lips, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Against this rule, great is the sin of the present generation of Christians; though the envy of Ephraim and Judah is, we hope, about to vanish away, never to return. Sections of the Christian church, that once stood aloof from each other, now cordially coalesce and cooperate in many good works. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

But Peter was so struck with the axiom which shocked the Pharisees, that he requested his Lord would explain it further. Are you surprised that even Peter, the Apostle, should need this explanation? Then you will not wonder that Christ said, "Are ye, also, yet without understanding? Do ye not perceive, that whatever enters into the mouth, merely affects the body; but that which comes from the mouth indicates the state of the heart? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, or reasonings, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man."

What a catalogue of sins! How justly may it be said of that fountain which pours forth such streams, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" The word "wickedness" is introduced into the catalogue, as given by Mark; and in the connexion in which it stands, it must be taken for malice. An evil eye, also, is mentioned by the same evangelist, to express either that false view of things which perverts the heart, or that cnvy which our Lord brands with infamy, when he says, "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

The practical application of this discourse, entering into the most vital parts of religion, demands our anxious consideration.

1. "The kingdom of heaven is not meats and drinks, but

righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

"Bodily worship profiteth little; but godliness is profitable to all things." External ceremonies, even when ordained of God, are of little value when compared with the worship of the heart. Notwithstanding all the numerous ceremonies prescribed to the Jews, the first and great commandment of the law was, "to love the Lord our God with all our heart:" and even the second was, not abstinence from meats, or offering sacrifice, or the use of divers baptisms, but to "love our neighbour as ourselves." The discreet scribe exclaimed, "Well, master, thou hast said the truth; to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." The rite of circumcision was, like baptism, instituted for the sake of teaching regeneration. Moses said to the Jews, "Circumcise the foreskin of thy heart: the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed."* "He is not a Jew," says Paul, "who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart." The baptism of the body, with water, is but a sign; for "we are saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." The supper of the Lord, too, is but a means of bringing us to feed, by faith, on the incarnate atoning Saviour. For we eat and drink unworthily, if we do not discern the Lord's body. The external worship of God in the church, is mere hypocrisy, if it be not an open expression of that homage of the heart which we owe to him who made and redeemed us.

To the state of the heart, then, our chief attention should be paid. If the heart be right, "every thing will be pure to us;" for, "to the pure, all things are pure; but to them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure."* To a believer, the positive law of heaven becomes moral law; for he bows to supreme authority in those institutions which would otherwise have no obligation, and derives from rites and ceremonies mental instruction and purification. Such was the design of the ordinances of God. This purity of heart will produce obedience to every precept, in every relation. First among the relative duties stands that which we owe to our parents, with whom we are placed in the earliest and most tender connexion, and to whom we owe more than we can ever repay. To be allowed to slight them, a religious man will count no privilege; to be enabled to serve them, he will prize as high honour and bliss.

2. It may be a duty to say and do those things which shock even the most zealous professors of religion.

We admire the Apostles' solicitude—" Master, the Pharisees deemed this saying scandalous, and accuse thee of contradicting the law of God, who prescribed the distinction of meats, and the ablutions of the ceremonial law." Christians, imitate the Apostles, and seek to prevent offence, by privately admonishing those who have created scandals. Do not, however, immediately conclude that he is wrong who has shocked the most popular professors of religion. We must not carry our charity to men so far as to compromise the authority of God. They may be mistaken, who say, "Are not those who hold certain institutions good people? Do they not mean well in those things? And is it not a pity to wound them? And would not charity induce us to comply? Is not charity greater than faith, or hope? What harm can compliance do?" To all this, the conduct of our Lord teaches us to say, "Charity rejoiceth in the truth;" and, therefore, never can bind us to do that which is injurious to truth. "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth," says the Apostle. No man's credit in religion should be so great as to set up

his feelings and practice in opposition to God's authority. We may shock men's prejudices; but if we do this, from regard to their souls, we are not uncharitable to them, while we are faithful to God. However good the intentions of those who make human additions to religion, these are always found to be injurious. Who can deny that many of the worst corruptions of Rome originated in pious designs, and were complied with from charitable intentions, and an amiable dread of offending against the unity of the church? But what Protestant will hesitate to say that the consequences have been most pernicious? They, at last, banished the Scriptures from the church, in order to keep the traditions of men. And who will deny that the modern Jews are held fast in the chains of unbelief, by their reverence for the traditions of the elders, and the authority of their rabbis? The Scriptures of the Old Testament have no power over them, to lead them to Christ, to whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, bear witness, but against whom the Talmud blasphemes. It is, therefore, a sacred duty to adhere to Scripture only, and to banish all human authority in religion.

To well-meaning professors, we should, indeed, avoid giving unnecessary offence. Ready to sacrifice our own comforts, we say, "If meat make my brother to fall, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to stumble." But though we should do nothing for mere obstinacy, or contradiction, or self-love, we should "not give place, for a moment," to human traditions, that the truth of the Gospel may continue with men. When, from a just sense of the sole authority of Christ in the church, from a mind awake to the pernicious consequences of human domination in religion, we, in the meekness of wisdom, and in the spirit of love, adhere to what we know to be the will of God, we must not be diverted from our course by fear of shocking the prejudices of the superstitious, however much we may regret their error, and love their persons, and value what is genuine in their religion.

3. By this early intimation, let us learn Christ's authority,

and his design, to introduce the reign of grace by the aboli-

His declaration that "the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath," was a prelude to his exercising authority over it, by changing the day of its observance, from the last to the first of the week, on which he rose. His word now calls it the Lord's day, and to the Lord we devote it. His discourse against ceremonial ablutions and the distinctions of meats and drinks, was introductory to that abolition of the Jewish ceremonial law, which followed, as much to the benefit of the Gentiles, as to the offence of the Jews. But he "blotted out the hand writing of ordinances that was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." Now, therefore, it is manifest to all men, that we are saved, not by works of law, or rites which we have performed; but, by grace, through faith. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ had made you free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage. You are called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." For the sake of that law of love, which is the presiding genius of the Christian religion, maintain your freedom from the commandments of men, and all those traditions which turn Christianity into a voke of ceremonies. For a spiritual religion is essentially benevolent, while bodily worship promotes sectarian pride and unholy strife. Again, I would repeat it; "The kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

LECTURE XV.

THE DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF OFFENCES.

MATT. xviii. 15-31.

Every thing in this world has a twofold aspect; the one fair and attractive, the other dark and repulsive. The earth itself, on one side, presents the cheerful face of day; on the opposite, the gloomy realm of night: towards one pole, summer smiles with its warmth and fertility; towards the opposite, winter lowers with its cold and sterility. This double aspect, man, the chief inhabitant of the earth, presents. Viewed with regard to that which presents itself to the eye, his body, he is mortal, feeble, sustained by the productions of the earth; but, considered with respect to that which lies within, known only by the intellect, he is spiritual, immortal, independent of matter, sustained solely by the power of God.

Is it not natural that a church, in such a world, composed of such beings, should partake of this double character? "Glorious things are, indeed, spoken of the city of God;" for "Zion is the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth," as far as it is constituted of "living stones," resting on Christ, the only foundation which God has laid. Here all is fair and lovely; for every Christian, complete in Christ, is "a temple of the Holy Spirit," is stamped with God's image, wears his law written on the heart, and is ripening for the perfection of holiness in heaven. But, while all that is honourable, and enviable, is spoken of the church, when considered on its bright side, it cannot be concealed that there is an opposite aspect. It is "a little flock, a poor and afflicted people," able to do nothing of itself, calling for all the patience and forbearance of its Lord, and requiring that

its members should, "in love, bear with one another," by that "charity which hides a multitude of faults." Here, therefore, the church will need rules to obviate the evils of her imperfections, and make them tolerable, till she arrive at that final state in which she shall be "presented a glorious church, without spot, or blemish, or any such thing."

I. It is supposed that offences will arise among Christian brethren: "If thy brother trespass, or sin against thee."

"All ye are brethren," says Christ to his disciples, and therefore they should love as brethren; and while they should be, towards the world, "wise as serpents," they should, towards all, and especially towards each other, "be harmless as doves." Since things are not all as they should be, our care should be to set them right, in the way which Christ directs. The differences are of two kinds.

1. Some are such as may be amicably terminated.

Those "evil surmisings," which we are charged to suppress, would make every offence a high crime and misdemeanour: magnifying the spots, (of which we say there are some in the sun,) into those which are "not the spots of God's children." It is at once surprising and humiliating, to observe what a microscope is the evil eye, how it magnifies trifles, and horrifles us with that which we find, on more calm inquiry, is a minor infirmity, to which we are all liable, and with which, in fact, we are all chargeable. For, "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." While we were in the world, and viewed the church from afar, we fancied that it pretended to sinless perfection; and, indeed, we falsely concluded, that those who professed to be Christians must be either perfect or hypocrites. But when, drawn to Christ, we found ourselves constrained to join his church, we soon discovered our error. Our own experience helped us to make this discovery; for we found that, though we judged ourselves sincere, really born of God, yet we had all the imperfection of "newly born babes," needing the forbearance of others, and, therefore, bound, in duty and charity, to show to others that candour

and lenity which we so much need. But faults or imperfections in our character, will often break out in our conduct, and create offences. When we think, indeed, of the many bonds, as mighty as they are tender, which bind Christians together, we say, "they should never disagree;" but when we reflect, that their amiable and holy principles, by which the communion of saints is maintained, are all in an infantile state, we cease to wonder that they do not produce their full effects. The first Christians were of one heart and one soul. But God, aware that this would not always be the case, has made provision for the restoring of harmony when disturbed. Here the case of private offences seems particularly intended. Every one should study to imitate the Apostle, who was anxious to "give no offence in any thing, either to Jew, or Gentile, or to the church of God." For though offences may be healed, they often leave a scar that is unsightly, and that reminds us of the wound. But if the offence will come, as it certainly will, more or less, we are divinely taught how to treat it. Still, I would repeat, again and again, the charge of a kind brother to the rest of the family, "See that ye fall not out by the way." And when ye do, beware of being so rash as to condemn with severity, and so hasty as to conclude at once that the wound is mortal, the breach too wide to be healed. Many of these differences may be like that sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas, which parted them asunder for a season, and made Paul reject John Mark, "who went not with them to the work." Yet the Apostle was afterwards so perfectly reconciled, that he said, "Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry." It was to bring about such a reconciliation that this direction of our Lord was given.

2. Other offences are such as require excommunication.

"Woe to the world," Christ once said, "because of offences:" v. 7—9.

When men that have named the name of Christ fall, like Judas, into apostacy, that they may "go to their own place," the world exults, and says, "Aha! so would we have it."

"They are all alike!" We, therefore, wonder that such an occurrence should have been suffered, when Christianity had its character to acquire. But Christ took care of his own cause, and no rational man now thinks the worse of the religion of Jesus, because Judas, the traitor, who was one of the twelve, sold his Lord. The affair of Ananias and Sapphira gives rise to the same reflections; and we admire the sincerity and truth of Scripture, that does not attempt to hush up these disgraceful apostacies in silence, as if afraid of the consequences; while we find that we need these instructive histories, because similar cases occur among us, to bring out to view all the beauty of Christ's instructions.

But the offences of which we now speak, are those created by persons who do not go off at once into the world, but, remaining with the church, require to be treated with the discipline which Christ here enjoins. If none but open apostates stained the fair fame of the church, we could lift up our heads with more boldness; but, alas! there was a Peter, whose name signifies a rock, but who fell into the sin of denying his Lord, with oaths and curses. When cases like these occur, we must investigate them, and not suffer them to pass unnoticed. Such events will prove stumbling blocks in the way of the world, by which it will "fall and be broken, and snared and taken;" for they will create, or confirm, prejudice against Christ and his church. If the world hate the Gospel and the people of God, the enmity is greatly aggravated, because it is fondly cherished, on account of the falls of those who seem to be of the church. While men are compelled to say, as the enemies of Daniel were, "we can find no fault in him, except on account of the law of his God," they may stifle their hostility; but, by the falls of professors, the air is let in upon the fires of enmity that were smouldering in secret, and, blazing up, they spread a destructive conflagration. We should have concluded, that it would be better to suffer no evil to enter the church; that it should be kept free, not merely from false pretenders, who afterwards become open apostates, and "go out from us, because they were not of us," but also from frail disciples, whose misconduct tarnishes the fair name of Christian. The kingdom of heaven, however, we have seen compared to a net cast into the sea, that brings up all sorts of fishes, good and bad; and it is not till the end of the world, that God "casts out of the kingdom every thing that offendeth." Yet, if all were sincere, or even eminent Christians, offences would not be avoided, unless all were absolutely perfect. In proportion to our imperfection will be our liability, both to give and receive offences. Those greater scandals that arise from hypocrites and apostates, keep us jealous over ourselves. Our relation to the church is no proof of the reality of our religion; and we are instructed and improved by the strain of preaching which becomes necessary in a society where we must sometimes imitate him who speaks of "all the sinners of my people." By this mixture of good and evil, even in the church, our ministry is modified. Preaching must not be a silver stream, that gently flows, and lulls men by its soft murmurs; but must sometimes be a cataract, that rushes from precipice to precipice, dashing, foaming, thundering, striking the soul with terrors, and rousing to "great searchings of heart." But that which we are here chiefly to notice, is the occasion given for the exercise of discipline in the church. Of this rule of Christ we are now to show,

II. It is prescribed that private admonition be the first remedy.

Our pride and selfishness and malevolence rush to hasty conclusions, and resort, in the first instance, to the last remedies. But Christians, redeemed and called by Divine grace, should take quite a different course, and proceed with caution and gentleness, in hope of a happy conclusion.

The steps that Christ enjoins are the following:

1. The most private remedies are first to be employed; "Go tell him his fault, between thee and him alone."

How beautiful is this direction! For we should say as Jacob did, "Perhaps it is an oversight;" thy brother may have offended inadvertently, by accident, by ignorance, or by inattention. It may be altogether a mistake on the part of him who is offended, and no such evil, as we supposed,

has been committed. For, in this world of error and of calumny, how frequently are injurious reports raised, for which, when we inquire, and closely investigate, there is found to be no shadow of reason. Evil rumours have been spread concerning the best of men; for the Son of God himself was called "a gluttonous man and a winebibber, one that forbad to give tribute to Cæsar." The reports that were current concerning the first Christians, gave colour to the most cruel persecutions; and innocent men were treated as the most vile, as not worthy to live. By going and speaking, then, to the supposed offender, in perfect privacy, we give opportunity to him to clear himself, if he can; and thus we may prevent the affair from going any farther.

Or, if he should have committed the offensive thing, and really have injured us, we may succeed in convincing him of his fault, and inducing him to repent of it, and ask our forgiveness. Then, it shall be said, "thou hast gained thy brother." How beautiful, again, is this stroke! It supposes that, by offences, we lose a brother, being deprived of that confidence we felt in his religion, and that tender charity we cherished towards him, "for the truth's sake which we thought dwelt in him." But that which we lost by the offence, we regain by his explanation, or contrition; and, exulting, we say, "This, my brother, was lost, and is found!" How great is this gain! The world, which becomes a desert to us, while we live in alienation from our fellow-men, through the disturbing forces of sin, is a paradise restored, when we find in a man, a brother, and feel our hearts knit to him in the fellowship of saints. Why, then, should we not be prompt to give this easy and just price, which is so productive of the highest gain?

Alas! it does not suit our pride and our rashness; for it requires that control which we are slow to exercise over our own spirits. To obey this command, we must be willing to take some trouble, though we give ourselves much more by neglecting it. We must be inspired with the "charity that rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; that beareth all things, hopeth all things." Is not this a happier

temper than that which makes us cling to an injurious opinion of another? The direction of our Redeemer demands also a meek and forgiving spirit. We must not go and speak angrily to our brother; and we are unhappily too often conscious that we are thrown out of a proper frame, by the offence given, or by the evil spirit which we have contracted. For this very reason, however, we are bound to obey the command, and take this first step, never venturing on another, till we have been with the offending person himself, and sought, by the most private means, to terminate the whole affair. By the tempers that are called up and cherished in such a procedure, we are immensely improved; so that we find God here also overrules the entrance of sin, to secure the highest glory to himself, and the greatest good of the church. The French proverb says, "it is only the first step that costs any thing." Let us pay whatever it may cost; for it will well reward the expense.

2. The next most private remedy we should employ, when the former fails.

"If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

Sin is always big with vengeance. Even before the judge has begun to exact the punishment, we are ourselves punished by our own faults. For these make us proud, sullen, malevolent, disdainful of those we have offended; so that it has become a proverb, "The injured may forgive, but the injurer never will." "He will not hear thee." The anticipation of this is too often made a reason for refusing to speak privately to an offender. We think to excuse ourselves, by saying, "It will be of no use, he will not hear me." Christ, however, peremptorily enjoins the first step, even on the supposition that the offender will not hear. Nor, shouldst thou conclude thus uncharitably, concerning him. But, suppose it certain; that would not justify thee in refusing to give him the opportunity to make explanations, or concessions. The performance of the duty will do thee good, if it should not do good to thy brother. We are so much benefited by

every thing that is reasonable, and kind, and conciliating, that we ought to regard this prescription as a privilege, not as a mere duty, much less as a hardship. No man can act as our Lord here shows Christians should do, without feeling that he is getting good, by the mere attempt to do good, even though that attempt should be abortive.

But he who refuses to hear, when another comes privately to expostulate, commits such a fault as should not be passed over without another attempt to recover him from evil. "Then take with thee one or two more" of thy Christian brethren; for this is an injunction that may lead to an appeal to the church, and therefore requires that the witnesses should be of such a body, as well as the litigant parties. These additional persons would give weight to the expostulations which had first been more privately given; so that "every word might be established." What the offender would not concede to one, he may be induced to grant to several. How surprising are the effects produced by a third party, who stands as mediator between two that differ! Men are rendered more reasonable, when they find that those who are not sharers in their irritation, are now the judges. But, if at length, the affair must go before the final tribunal, the church will be furnished with impartial witnesses, who, not being themselves principals, are fitter to guide the decision of the court. For that no man should be witness and judge in his own cause, is a maxim of justice. It is, therefore, necessary, that when an authoritative sentence is to be pronounced, there should be some who may confirm it, as the award of equity, in order that it may have its due influence on the conscience.

If the testimony of two or three brethren should give such weight to the truth, as to lead to an acknowledgment of fault, or to an explanation that will remove the offence, then, as before, we shall have gained our brother. It may, however, be otherwise; for he may disregard the mediators. The same temper that made the offender refuse to hear thee, may cause him even to slight several more. "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason."

How should this painful supposition alarm us, and make us watch, with jealous care, against the obstinacy that too often takes possession of our souls! Let us, notwithstanding all discouragements, be found willing to assist in adjusting differences, and acting as mediators, between offended brethren. "Blessed are the peace-makers; they shall be called the children of God."

III. The church is constituted the final appeal, on earth; as Christ is the ultimate judge, in heaven.

"If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican."

Here is a great body of truth, which has been opposed by all sorts of errors; so that we should come with a circumspect and obedient mind, to a law so authoritative and important. We may more profitably proceed in our investigation, if we pursue the following order, considering,

1. What this implies concerning the nature of the church. "Tell it to the church."

The Church of Rome has attempted to terrify the world with the thunder of these words. But what is their church? All that are called Catholics through the whole world. How then shall we tell it to such a church? It is impossible. Convinced of this, they have invented another meaning for the word church, and have called ministers by that name. But unless we make anything out of anything, and give to the words of Scripture significations by chance, or as it may suit our convenience, or our interests, which would render the very words to which we appeal, null and void; we should prove that the word church, does, in Scripture, sometimes mean the ministers. This has not been attempted, and is, indeed, impossible. The church is sometimes distinguished from the ministers, but these are never made the church. Paul writes "to the church at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons;" reversing the meaning attempted to be established by the Church of Rome.

The same observations apply to every national church. For how can we discuss an affair before a church that

includes a whole nation? A Protestant clergy no more makes a church, than the body of Catholic priests, with the Pope at their head. The original might, with the greatest propriety, be translated,—Tell it to the assembly, or congregation; evidently meaning that one to which the differing parties belong. It is manifest, therefore, that our Lord had in his view, what is called a Congregational church; a single assembly of Christians convened in one place. No other idea could the disciples, to whom this charge was first addressed, ever have derived from these words. Such a church is supposed to afford an opportunity of appeal. A brother who, offended by the conduct of another, was unable, by previous steps, to bring him to a right mind, might here find a court of final appeal. The same view of a church is given by other passages of Scripture, especially those which speak of the discipline of the church at Corinth. No other kind of church was known in the earliest ages; and no other can answer the ends of Christian fellowship.

2. What this prescribes as the duty of the church towards its members.

Every church should maintain discipline. For all societies are supposed to have authority over their own members, and to be concerned to keep them on good terms with each other. The church must, therefore, pass a sentence on such appeals as are made to it. But when this is to be done by an assembly, it manifestly must be by vote, to be taken as each assembly, or church, may think good. There is no other rule by which human affairs can be managed.

The sentence which the church is bound to pronounce must be given by its organ, its officers, since a whole assembly can in no other way speak what we are bound to hear.

The church should take care that its voice be, like that of its Lord, wise, holy, and benevolent, as well as authoritative; in fact, worthy to be heard. When it is composed of members fit for Christian communion, and maintains a scriptural discipline, it will be respected by all who obey the head. The voice of the church has been known to produce the happiest and most salutary effects, where other methods had

failed, and where we had almost despaired of seeing any good result. For Christ has not erected a tribunal in his church, and made its sentences final on earth, without kind designs. He will honour his own ordinance, and make it a blessing to all that obey his word.

But, as he said to his disciples, "if they receive my words, they will also receive yours;" so he adds, "he that despiseth you, despiseth me." There may be cases in which men "will not hear the church." It is not infallible, and therefore men take the liberty of refusing to hearken to it, even when it judges right. But should not an individual seriously pause before he sets up his own judgment, in his own cause, and bids defiance to the voice of that very society which he himself entered, with an implied, if not an expressed engagement to conform to its discipline? Deference to the voice of the church is not sacrificing our own judgment; because it was the act of our own judgment to join a church, and place ourselves under its discipline. If we believe this was enjoined by Christ, we are submitting to him in hearkening to his church. If we question its decisions, only when they happen to be against us, may not this be the effect of our passions, rather than our reason?

But what should the church do, when any one will not hear it? Shall it proceed to punish, or to persecute? This has been attempted. Excommunication has been made a horrible affair, cursing men for eternity, and handing them over to the secular arm, to be treated as criminals, to whom no mercy can be shown, either by God or man. Such are the methods by which a false church has attempted to compel men to hearken to it.

But scriptural excommunication is nothing more than the word signifies, putting a person out of the communion of the church. He who does not conform to the rules of a society, nor comply with its decisions, cannot be allowed to belong to it. And this is all that Christ enjoins. "If he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican." How then did Christ, or his church, regard such persons? As enemies, to be hated and persecuted? No!

as persons to be pitied, as objects of benevolent effort for their conversion and salvation. It is well known that Christ's enemies charged him with being a friend of publicans and sinners. Heathens are the objects of the benevolent missions directed to all the world, that heathens, as well as Jews, might be gathered into the church, and find salvation in Christ. What punishment, then, is there in this? some would say. As far as we are concerned, there is none at all. For we are not called to punish, but to say, with our Lord, "If any man hear not my words, I judge him not." The excommunicated person is put out of the church, and thus thrown back into the world from which we received him. This is what the Apostle means by saying, "Deliver such a one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." If he reflect duly on his state, he will feel that he is now regarded by the church of God, as one no longer a brother. Should this be the fact, he may not feel it, and therefore may derive no benefit from the sentence under which he is fallen. In that case, it is, however, an advantage to the church, to be delivered from the evil "leaven that would have leavened the whole lump." But even a wicked man may find that this discipline was instituted for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. When the sentence of exclusion smites one who is a real Christian, though fallen into a bad spirit, he will be likely to feel his separation from a Christian society, especially when the law of Christ has been scrupulously obeyed. Repentance should, then, be followed by restoration, according to another part of the divine word-" If a man be overtaken in a fault, you that are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

3. What is declared concerning God's regard for his church.

"Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing

that they shall ask; it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

God does nothing in vain; and though he has instituted a tribunal in his church, without giving it authority to execute what men would call punishments, he has taken that affair into his own hands. From the connexion, it is manifest, that the binding and loosing, are the acts of the church, sitting in judgment on the differences between its own members. Those who are pronounced guilty are bound to give satisfaction to the injured; and those who are declared innocent are released from all such obligation. Men may despise the decisions of a court that cannot inflict a civil penalty; but God will not hold them guiltless. What are all the terrors of modern ecclesiastical courts to this appalling consideration?

But it is supposed that the church conducts its deliberations, and pronounces its decisions, in the spirit of prayer, entreating God to confirm his own institutions, by bringing all parties to feel the just award. God will hear and answer the prayer. They who appeal to heaven, in a righteous cause, are stronger than they who invoke the powers of earth. "Vengeance is mine," saith Jehovah: "I will repay." To a Christian this is more certain and more awful than any decree of human tribunals; and if, to a man of the world, it appears a pointless dart, the church is taught to say, "What have we to do to judge them that are without?" "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

For Christ presides in the church, with which he is always present. Let none imagine that this is confined to splendid buildings, or immense assemblies. For if these were required to give due honour to his Majesty, the temple of Solomon would not be sufficiently magnificent, nor would an assembled world be numerous enough to claim his presence.

He therefore says, with his characteristic grace, that where the smallest number that could be called an assembly, two or three, are met in his name, there is he "in the midst of them." This is the language of Deity. God says, "In all places where I record my name, I will come to you and bless you." The Jewish rabbis affirm, that where two or three meet, to expound the law, Jehovah is there; and Mahomet has introduced into his Koran,* the sentence, that "where two or three are, God is the fourth." Christ claims a knowledge of all Christian assemblies, however small and obscure; and teaches us that his omnipresence fills them all. Let his condescending grace, in stooping to visit us, make the assemblies which he honours with his presence, dear to us; and his holiness cause us to respect the decisions of his church, saying, "God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him."

^{*} This is manifestly stolen from the Gospel; but, as usual, is spoiled by Mahomet's additions; for it stands thus: Surat 58, "Do you not consider, that God knows what is in heaven and what is in earth? For there are not three in a meeting, but he is the fourth; nor five, but he is the sixth; and whether they are few, or many, God is with them."

LECTURE XVI.

CHRIST'S PREDICTION OF HIS DEPARTURE AND ITS EFFECTS.

John viii. 21-30.

The ancient seers never display the nature and glory of the inspiring spirit more illustriously than when Christ is their theme. They delight to exhibit the Messiah as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's Israel. They display the blessings of his reign in such strains as these: "He shall come down like rain on the mown grass:" "in his days the righteous shall flourish." But they mingle shades with these bright lights; not concealing the melancholy fact of his rejection.

We are now, however, to listen to Christ himself disclosing the awful scenes that awaited him; joining with the ancient prophets in foretelling gloomy things. Though he did not refrain from proclaiming his own glory, as the light of the world, for which his enemies reproached him, as praising himself; he now unveils the ignominy and agony of the cross, and discloses what might be called his failure; that though he came for salvation, he would be rejected; and retiring to heaven, would leave men, not merely to that very ruin from which he was to deliver us, but even to greater condemnation.

This discourse seems to have been a continuation of a former, since we have no break, nor any change of scene, or time. Yet there are intimations of a change of audience; so that we may conclude, that the Pharisees, who had exclaimed against his assertion of his own glory, unable to contend with him, had withdrawn. Christ therefore turns to the multitude, who remained to listen, many of them with no better mind than the Pharisees. The event shows that some, however,

were not far from the kingdom of God; and, happily for them, they at last entered in.

I. Christ gives a faithful warning of the greatest of all evils, v. 21—27.

When it is observed, by the Evangelist, that Jesus said to them, "again;" it seems to intimate, that though the discourse had taken a turn which offended many of the hearers, and caused them to go away, it was not therefore broken off and closed. In his unwearied grace the Saviour resumed the conversation, and gave them another warning, affording them line upon line, and precept upon precept. He apprises them of

1. His own departure.

He passed his time here, enduring such contradiction of sinners against himself, that we wonder, admire, and adore, while we witness his patience. But he who was not always to live in such society, and suffer such vexations, was now verging towards the end of his trying course. Like the sun breaking away from the mists, and hastening to set in the evening to rise on a brighter morning, Jesus turns from this trying scene and says, "I go my way." This is one of those softer expressions, which are called euphemisms, or turns of speech that avoid the mention of that harsh word death, by the substitution of other phrases of equivalent import, but of more welcome sound. Thus Jacob says, "I go the way of all the earth;" and Job, "I shall go whence I shall not return." But Christ loved to speak of his death as going to his Father who had sent him; for amidst the conflicts he maintained with the wicked, and the odium they cast on him, he delighted to say, "He is near that justifieth me, I know that I shall not be ashamed." He speaks in the present tense, "I go," or "am going." This was ever in his view. It was a sufficient counterpoise against the enemies and dangers that surrounded him, that he was on the point of leaving them all, to enter into the presence of one that infinitely loved and approved him.

Pleasant, however, as this was to him, it was most ominous to his enemies; for, if he was the light of the world, what

would be the consequence of his going away, but fearful darkness? If his coming was "glad tidings of great joy," what was his going, but melancholy news, that would spread the sadness of death? He had warned Jerusalem, saying, "Be thou instructed, lest my soul depart from thee;" and now he repeats the warning, with this addition, "I am going; think of your state when I shall be gone. What will be left when I have departed? Where will you find such another? Is there in the compass of this wide world one that will do for you what I have done; or teach you what I have taught; or present to you such an object as is now before you?" Unhappily the warning was lost upon them, and we have to consider,

2. Their woeful state, when he should be gone; "Ye shall die in your sins." The Greek says merely, "Ye shall die in the sin;" and though the article may be taken to imply, as it frequently does, the pronoun, your sin, still there seems to be a reference to the sin which was peculiarly their own, that of unbelief, the rejection of the long promised Messiah. The prophet Ezekiel had spoken thus of the wicked; "He shall die in his sin." This was the sin of that age, of which the prophet asks, "Who shall declare his generation?" Or tell the iniquity of that portion of the human race, and of the nation of Israel, among whom Christ appeared, and by whom he was rejected and crucified? But, like many others, after having rejected the blessing, when offered to them, they would, as soon as it was withdrawn, seek for it. Their eye failed them, for looking after the Saviour long foretold. They were emboldened to provoke the Romans, by their confident expectation of the long promised deliverer. When pressed, in the siege of Jerusalem, they were mad after a Messiah. Finding no other, when they had spurned the true friend of sinners, they died in their sins. He would have taken away their sins, if they had come to him; but they put him away and kept their sins. Often had they shown the temper of the Gadarenes, who preferred their swine to their Saviour, and because the herd was drowned, entreated him to depart out of their coasts. But, left in their sins, by the departure of the only one that taketh away the sin of the world, what remained but that they should die in their sins? Of this, therefore, Christ warned them. The destruction of their city was but the fearful external sign of wrath to the soul; as Moses, when predicting the siege, told them that the wrath of God should "burn to the lowest hell."*

Christ, therefore, foretells their obstinate impenitence. You will seek me, that is, inquire and long for the coming of a Messiah. They would not repent; but notwithstanding all the signs that should follow the crucifixion, in the descent of the Spirit, and the miracles wrought by the Apostles, in the setting up of the Christian Church; the nation would persist in its unbelief and rejection of the only hope. Had they repented and turned to God, they should have "saved their souls alive;" but what could save them from their sins, if they spurned the only sacrifice for sin? There remained nothing, therefore, but "a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries."

Christ's glory stands in awful contrast with their sin. He should go away to his glory; but they, dying in their sin, could not go whither he went. "He entered into the holiest of all, by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us;" but they, dying in sin, could not be admitted into that holy place that shuts out all sin. He went, full of love to his Father, and heaven received him with a joyous welcome; but they, dying at enmity with God, and holiness, and the law, could not come into the presence of him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

Of the consequence of not believing that Jesus was the Christ, he warned them. "I said, therefore, ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Whatever men may say about our having no controul over our own belief, and however they may laud the innocence of unbelief; the doctrine of Christ and of the whole Bible, is in direct opposition.

Are not those who reject Christ, generally found to be

wicked men? And are not those whose piety is manifest, whose sanctity is eminent, known to be believers on the Son of God? It is a matter of notoriety, as well as of fact, that unbelief has a connexion with sin, and faith with holiness. There is sin in not believing in the Son, and sin that, if persisted in, cannot be forgiven. Then, what becomes of the severe censures so often passed on the denunciations of the Gospel against unbelief? Is it not kindness to warn men of that, which, though they think it innocent, is a crime of the deepest die, fraught with dangers inevitable? Was not this warning of our Lord worthy of his gracious lips? Shall we decry him, as severe, for brandishing a sword over their heads? Was it not to put them on their guard, lest it should be plunged into their hearts? Cursed be that kindness which ruins us. Should I be so tender of my friend's ears, as to refrain from the shrill cry that should save him from the flames? Blessed be that severity that tells us wholesome, though unwelcome truths. Let me hear of my doom, that I may never feel it. Christ and his ministers will never leave perishing souls to say, "Why did you not warn me ?"

But this warning was of the nature of a prediction, or prophecy, from Christ's lips. It produced, however, nothing but cavils on their part. "Will he kill himself?" they ask. What signs had Christ ever shown of such a temper as leads to self-murder? Had he not baffled their attempts to kill him? Why, then, should they think that he could have any such intention, or give such a hint? Because he said, "Whither I go, ye cannot come?" No, no; it was because they were wishing to kill him. They were from beneath; from the empire of Satan, the murderer, who urged them on to their own destruction, by rejecting Christ. In the siege of Jerusalem, driven to desperation, they displayed such acts of self-murder, as fill the soul of him that reads the sad story, with grief and horror. But Christ was from above; from that heaven of love and purity, that knows no self-destruction, no revolting against God's sovereign will, no loathing of life, no sense of guilt, or danger, or grief, or horror. But what a censure is

passed on this world, when Christ says, "You are of this world; I am not of this world." Is this equivalent with the former expression, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above?" Are earth and hell identical? To be of this world, is to be of the infernal world. Well did the Psalmist say, "Lord deliver me from men of this world, who have their portion in this life." For the world lieth in the wicked one; yet some boast of being men of the world. But Christ gave himself to redeem us from the present evil world; and if we share in his salvation, he says of us, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

When our Saviour refers again to what "he had said," he teaches us to look back upon it. "I said, therefore, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins." There is something peculiar in the original expression, as may be seen by the Italic character of our translators, if the Bibles be correctly printed, the pronoun, he, being thus shown to be not in the Greek. This accords with the idiom of the Hebrew, in which the Old Testament is written, and the Syriac, in which our Lord spoke. God says to his people, "I am;" and they say to him, "Thou art." Isa. xlviii. 12. "I am, I the first and I the last." The very name, Jehovah, seems to be but a modification of these expressions; "I am what I am." In the Hebrew, it is, "I will be what I will be." The Syriac, therefore, renders this passage; "If ye believe not that I, I," which is the idiom for I am, but approaches the expression, "I am that I am." Such was Christ, the Infinite Eternal Being, the Deity manifest in the flesh. But they, believing him not, crucified him as a blasphemer, for asserting his own glory.

In the spirit of insolence and cavil they asked, "Who art thou?" not wishing to know; he, therefore, does but refer them to what he had before said, "The same that I told you from the beginning." Here, again, there is a peculiarity in the original, which, literally translated, would read thus, I am, the beginning; or, I told you, from the beginning. This gospel opens with the declaration, that, in the beginning, was the word. He that is before all things, is the for-

mer of all things, and all things were made by him. But "the beginning" is used adverbially by the Greeks, for altogether, or absolutely, and thus we may read, I am altogether what I told you.*

They knew not that he spake to them of the Father, but thought of some other. Such is the bewilderment and confusion that attends those who reject Christ and are dying in their sins, that every thing is perverted, and all that should instruct and save them, proves abortive. Lord, save us from the infatuation of sin. We have now to listen to,

II. A prediction of an unavailing discovery, v. 28.

To a great extent, these Jews were really ignorant; for they had blinded their own eyes. But we are now informed that when they should know more, it would not be to their salvation; for wilful ignorance would be followed by forced knowledge, and the latter would turn to no better account than the former. The death of Christ would make discoveries both of Christ and the Father.

1. Of Christ himself.

"When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man, ye shall know that I am he."

* This passage has created great embarrassment to translators and expositors. Martini renders it, "I that speak to you, the beginning; Il principio, io che a voi parlo;" and de Sacy says, "Je suis le principe de toutes choses, moi même qui vous parle." This is nearly the same version that Lampe approves. But Diodati translates thus: "Io vi dico ancora lo stesso c'ho detto al principio. I say to you again the same thing that I said to you at the beginning." But Raphelius makes out a strong case for the adverbial use of the word $\partial \rho_X \partial \nu$, as signifying "I am absolutely what I told you." This sense I should prefer, did not the connexion seem to require that we should take the first word Christ uttered, as an answer to their question, "who art thou?" Here the Syriac, instead of assisting, embarrasses us. For the Peshito says, $\lambda = 2$

"Even should I begin to speak to you, I have many things to say." Tremellius gives the following version: "Etiam quem incepi ut loquerer vobiscum;" which the margin attempts to explain thus: "Etiamnum me eum esse duco quem ab initio apud vos me esse professus sum."

They pretended more ignorance than they really felt, though this was quite enough; but our Saviour here informs them that they should know more in a future day. The title he here gave himself was, that of the Son of man, which, from his love and his brotherly feeling, he delighted to bear; for he is not ashamed to call us, men, brethren, and himself Son of man, as one of us. But this title was that which David had given to the Messiah, in the eighth Psalm, exclaiming, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the Son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Lifting up, was the phrase he had employed before, in predicting his death; saying, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up." It was an elevation, indeed, for the cross was his glory, and should be ours. But it served to throw obscurity over the prediction of his death, since the Jews thought of nothing but stoning to death as the punishment of blasphemy, which they more than once attempted to inflict on Christ. But they would, at last, crucify him, and succeed in lifting him up on the cross, and then would see who he was, or, as the original expresses it, that "I am." For no sooner was Christ crucified, than many who came together to that sight, seeing what things were done, smote their breasts and returned. Some, perhaps, said, with the centurion, "Surely this was the Son of God." After the death of Jesus, three thousand, pricked to the heart, cried, "What shall we do?" Knowing that the Son of man was the Son of God, they joined his church, and lived to worship and to serve him. The first Christian churches were formed of Jewish converts, of whom mention is made at the close of this discourse. But what a display of grace was that which said, that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem!" Where they had lifted up the Son of man on the cross, there they "looked at him, whom they had pierced, and mourned for him, as for an only son." What a discovery for those Jews, who, with Saul of Tarsus, found that the crucified one, whom their fathers killed, was the Messiah!

But to many others, whom our Redeemer was now addressing, it would be either knowledge without faith; conviction without repentance; or such repentance as that of Judas, who, when "he saw that Jesus was condemned, repented, and went and hanged himself." It is to be feared that many who saw what was done at the crucifixion, and afterwards perceived the spirit of the Apostles, and their heroic preaching of Christ's resurrection and Messiahship, were to a great degree, convinced that Christ was what he professed to be. But having committed themselves, and being too proud to retract, they plunged deeper and deeper in guilt, till the siege of Jerusalem brought with it fresh proofs of Christ's truth, in the fulfilment of his prediction, and fresh marks of heaven's vengeance for his blood. Soon they said to the Apostles, "Ye intend to bring this man's blood upon us." How different from the language they lately held; "his blood be on us, and on our children!" Then they were ambitious of the honour of shedding it; now they seem to shrink, with alarm, at having this blood brought upon them. Many, indeed, were the scenes that began, after he was lifted up, to prove that he was all he professed to be; but they seemed to say, "there is no hope; we have loved idols, and after them we must go." What can be conceived of, more awful, than such a conviction of error, severed from repentance of heart? A discovery that we have done wrong, combined with a resolution to brave it out to the end, let the consequences be what they may!

2. Of the Father, too, they would have a new discovery.

They at first imagined that their success in crucifying Christ, was a proof that God had forsaken him. His lamentation on the cross contributed to confirm them in that error; so they "did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Some, however, changed their mind, and felt that he did nothing of himself, but all in obedience to his Father's will. Having taken upon himself the office of a servant, he did not even speak any thing of himself, but as the Father taught him, for "the counsel of peace was between them both." Those whose eyes were opened, after the crucifixion, saw plainly

that the Father bore witness to him on the cross, and in the grave, and in his resurrection and ascension. Even those who discovered somewhat of their error, without repenting of it, saw such signs of the Father's testimony to him as confounded them. The wicked still see heaven favouring the cause of Christ and religion, and quarrel with God for it. We shudder to see our fellow-creatures falling under the "woe denounced on him that striveth with his Maker." Our Lord, however, in the prospect of being hung up on the cross, calmly contemplates it as an elevation; enjoys the prospect of the conviction it would pour in to the minds of sinners, and exults in the assurance that all his sufferings would be beheld by the Father with infinite complacence. If men oppose and blaspheme, if we are despised and rejected, or even executed as criminals, happy are we, if we can say, "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

Of this, our Saviour had now a welcome proof. For "while he spake these words, many believed on him." Predicting his own death, he found that he was set, not only for the fall, but for the rising again of many in Israel. It is not said, that all, nor even that most, believed. Yet many were struck while he spoke these words. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Grace was given at that moment, to verify Christ's declaration that the Father had not left him alone. Men perceived in his spirit, a sincerity; a confidence in his Father; a satisfaction of soul, and an assurance of the fulfilment of all his own declarations, that went to the heart, and caused them to mix faith with what they were hearing. What can be more conducive to faith in Christ, than the Father's declaration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him?" Oh that the consideration of these words may now give them new triumphs over the unbelief of those who still hear them reechoed in the Gospel!

What a theme of meditation has now engaged us! The Saviour's departure! "I go my way." He that fulfilled the threat by leaving the earth, may again forsake those

who reject him. He comes, or goes, by his Gospel, as well as in his own person. Beware, lest the kingdom of God be taken from you. If Christ, in judgment, withdraw his word, recall his ministers, and deprive us of the means of religion, what remains but death, in that fiercest form, dying in our sins? Muse over that expression till it fill you with horror, for what can be more fearful? To die, must always be a solemn affair. When attended with every consolation, death is a mighty change to an accountable creature. But to die in our sins, is to meet death armed with all that can make it the king of terrors. And how should it be otherwise, while we persist in unbelief? "For if we believe not that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, we must die in our sins." Believe, then, and throw off that sting of death, sin; believe, and know that Christ is yours for ever.

What triumphs attend the cross! Though it, doubtless, seemed to the Jews, that, when they had lifted up Christ they should never believe that he was that glorious person which he pretended to be. They said, perhaps, if we believe not till we have crucified him, we shall never believe at all. Jesus, however, knew that the cross would be his triumphal chariot, in which he should spoil principalities and powers. His words were fulfilled; his anticipated triumph was enjoyed; he was lifted up, and men saw that he was all he professed to be. Nor is there now, any instrument of his glory more efficient, than that cross on which he was put to shame. "The preaching of the cross is, to us who are saved, the power of God."

To those who "believed while he spake," what a happy change occurred. The departure of Christ was, to the impenitent, all that was most ominous; but, to believers, it was a blessing. "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice; because I said, I go to the Father." Jesus never utterly quits the believer, but says, "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world. I will never leave you, never forsake you." By his departure we have "a hope that is an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, entering into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus,

made a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec." Christ, while on earth, ministered for us in the sanctuary of the church; but in heaven he officiates for us in the holy of holies, and sends, from thence, a heaven on earth.

Let us remember, that, following in the track of our Lord, we shall soon say with him, "I go my way." For "we are strangers and sojourners on earth, as all our fathers were." "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Good and profitable it is to reflect on our departure, and to speak of it to those whom we are about to quit. Who, if he anticipated a journey on the face of this earth, could refrain from speaking of it? Who would not find, that, in proportion to the distance and importance of the removal, he was reminded of it by almost every one he met, and prompted, by innumerable circumstances, to prepare for the event? But to change worlds, is an affair of such magnitude, that we should never lose sight of it. This last journey requires such preparation, that we should avail ourselves of every opportunity of turning our eyes away from scenes which we are about to quit, and towards that into which we are to enter, to dwell for ever there. To enjoy, with our forerunner, the delectable prospect of going to a home that waits to receive us, and to a Father who is always pleased with us, is the high privilege of the believer. This should attract our thoughts and affections towards the hour of our departure, and make it pleasant to say, "I am going." If the cultivation of the domestic affections has made our earthly home pleasant to us, we shrink from leaving it, even to pay a visit to a friend, and turn pleasantly towards home again after each remove. But since Jesus is gone to heaven, that must be our home, and to meet an approving Father should kindle our warmest desires. To talk of it is natural, and, both to ourselves and our friends, profitable; for we need to be drawn off from a world on which we are too apt to dote, and attracted towards one, which, though it has every claim to our hearts and our hopes, we are prone to slight.

But the example of Christ teaches us, that, while we

willingly indulge the thought of going hence, there should be no misanthropy in our spirit, no abandonment of our interest in the welfare of this earth, which is the most important province of the government of God. Jesus dwelt on what would be the consequence of his departure, and what men would think of him, when they had lifted him up on the cross. Peter, too, said, "Knowing that I must shortly put off this my tabernacle, as my Lord Jesus hath showed to me, I will endeavour that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance." To regard our posthumous reputation, for the sake of the Divine honour, and the benefit of the world, is not worldly ambition, but divine philanthropy. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance; while the memory of the wicked shall rot." It was the glory of Christ, that, after he had been crucified as an impostor, his veracity, and sanctity, and benevolence, were discovered and appreciated, and filled the world with admiration. In this, his people should, after their humble measure, resemble their Lord. While we live, men may mistake us; when we are dead, we may be better understood. For envy, which gnaws on living bodies, quits the corpse. They who have reviled and persecuted contemporary Christians, have praised the dead. The Puritans, whose principles excited the most bitter opposition, and who spent their lives in forced concealment, or in loathsome prisons, are now universally honoured. Their excellencies are set off against our faults, and we are told that we are degenerate sons. This, alas! is, in some respects, too true. Bunyan, who, hunted by the pursuivants of the ecclesiastical court, spent a large part of his life in prison, among criminals, is now eulogized by the first scholars of the age; and those who are the ornaments of our national literature, vie with each other in writing laudatory critiques on the genius and piety displayed by the author of the Pilgrims' Progress. It is a special favour from heaven to be allowed to live in usefulness when we are dead, and to work for God and mankind when we are resting in our graves.

If we cannot, in the largest sense, say, " such honour have all the saints," we may in a more limited degree. Let our religion be sincere, and our devotion ardent, and we shall leave behind us such evidences as will convince and edify survivors. Our real character will then come out to view; and if we wished to conceal ourselves, we could not succeed. But our lives should be such as require no concealment, while they last, or when they end. On the contrary, we should so walk with God, and so live for the church, that our removal may not annihilate, but even augment our usefulness. To have been, like our head, "despised and reiected of men," will be recompensed by sharing in his posthumous success. He, like Samson, overthrew his foes in death; and many of Christ's disciples leave behind them that evidence of grace, that makes their enemies ashamed, when they see roses blow on the grave, and shed a fragrance, sweet and refreshing, to each successive age.

LECTURE XVII.

TRUE LIBERTY.

JOHN viii. 31-44.

LIBERTY! What a charm attends that sound! What force has it exerted on the human mind! To what efforts has it roused men! Its effects have been all but miraculous. They have given to history the air of romance; for at the magic voice of freedom, deeds have been performed that have created all Greek, all Roman fame. The very soil has been enchanted by liberty and the little rocky territory of Greece made a paradise, enriched with works of art, which, even in their decay, attract the footsteps of the traveller, and extort the admiration of genius in every subsequent age. Liberty made Greece a barrier against all Asia, shining in barbaric gold and arms. No physical advantages have proved a sufficient counterpoise to the moral force of liberty; for the wreck of an army of freemen has vanquished the most numerous host of slaves.

Yet these wonders have been achieved by what was little more than the shadow of a great name; for of real liberty, even its boasted sons knew next to nothing. To him who is not to be deceived by high-sounding words, and fair pretence, and superficial glitter, the freedom of Greece and Rome appears little else than a fascinating cheat. They who held the captives of other nations, and even a large portion of their own countrymen, in degrading and cruel bonds, could not themselves have been truly free. To the Christian, who knows what real liberty means, the freedom which genius has lauded, or valour acquired, is but the chain of the slave,

with the name of liberty branded on the links. For we are now to show, that

"He is a freeman whom the truth makes free, And all are slaves besides."

"If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed." Let us listen, then, to the great liberator of our race, and learn from him the true idea of liberty, whose very name has wrought such wonders in the earth. We have this day* great advantages for the consideration of this subject; for now the eight hundred thousand slaves in the British colonies are by law made free.

I. Christ's proclamation of liberty is contained in v. 31, 32.

Some who heard Christ's declaration, "The Father is with me, for I do always those things that please him," believed on his name, and were, to the eye of heaven, at that moment emancipated. To the view of man, indeed, they kept their places unchanged, undistinguished in the heterogeneous crowd; but Christ, with his all-piercing eye, marked them, and addressed the first part of this discourse to them, while the latter part is directed to those who, persisting in their unbelief, cavilled at what was so kindly said to those who were made free. Inquire, then,

1. Who are the freemen that enjoy solid liberty?

Those who believe the proclamation of liberating grace which Christ now delivered. For while national freedom is not to be taken on trust, but to be claimed, and asserted, and actually seized and possessed by our own energies, or it is nothing but a phantom; the soul's freedom must be given by Christ, and received by faith in his word. "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed." The soul is considered as throwing itself into the arms of the Gospel, and committing itself to that gracious word. But the proof of the sincerity of this belief lies in its continuance; "for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." The insane have their lucid intervals, when sound ideas and just con-

^{*} August 1, 1834, the day in which the Act for the Abolition of Slavery came into operation.

clusions flash across their minds; but they are momentary gleams, and they apply only to certain subjects; while the sane uniformly view all things in a rational right, which guides them with a steady ray. The temporary professor of religion may have a momentary glimpse of the truth, and a transient glow of affection; but the real believer has an enduring principle of reliance on Christ, and a love to him which goes through life, through death, and into eternity.

It is he, therefore, who endures to the end that shall be saved. Continuance in Christ's word is the proof that we are disciples indeed. We have, by persevering to this day, better evidence than we had yesterday; and if we continue till to-morrow, our evidence of sincerity will be stronger than it is to-day. "Then shall you know the truth;" either the truth of that which you at first took solely on my credit, or, which is nearly the same, Christ himself, who is the truth; whom they know best who have believed longest. Such, indeed, is the progress which an aged disciple makes in the knowledge of Christ, that he sometimes thinks he could hardly be said to have known the Lord when first brought to profess his name. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning." "The path of the just is a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Doubtless, these converts, newly won, felt this promise fulfilled, when the Son of man was lifted up, and they saw on the cross the true sacrifice for sin.

This was the truth that was to make them free. Some place liberty in a state of indifference, which, if it were perfect, would be felt to be the most galling bondage; for we could then do nothing but stand and hesitate, even hesitating whether we should hesitate. But let us exchange false philosophy for common sense, and we shall own that then we are free when we do as we like; and most truly free when we always choose to do as we ought. For if we merely do as we please, and find that we chose what we ought to have refused, we resemble the slave who hugs his chain. But by the knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus," that which

was our duty and our interest becomes our choice. Then we say, "To serve God like what some men would call slaves, is to reign as kings." The knowledge of the truth concerning Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, sets us free from the bondage of the covenant of works, and from the lash of a guilty conscience. The same truth breaks the fascinating spell of sin which bound us fast, and teaches us the hatefulness of it; causes us to choose holiness as beauteous, and fills us with the lofty aims of a free-born soul, that aspires to be perfect as God is perfect. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." By continuance in Christ's word, we advance towards the consummation of that which the Apostle calls "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Let us now inquire,

2. Who is the liberator? "If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed."

He exhibits the contrast between a slave and a son; that he may introduce himself as the author and giver of liberty. A slave is but a temporary appendage to a family, being bought and sold; called, or sent away; retained, or turned off for ever; like Ishmael, of whom it was said, "Cast out the son of the bond-woman." But the free-born child is a constant resident in the family; and there is a son of whom the Scripture saith, "he is over his own house." This son, therefore, has authority to give freedom to the slave. He opened his commission by saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captive." This is done two ways.

By the price of twenty millions paid to the slave holders, our nation has now given, at least in intention, liberty to all its slaves who have not paid for it themselves. Thus saith the Lord, "Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money." To Christ, however, this cost more than millions; "for ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "Christians, ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price."

God called Cyrus, and gave him power to conquer Babylon, "that he may let go my captives, not for price or reward." When the combined European fleets bombarded Algiers, they liberated the prisoners who had been held in slavery. Jesus Christ has power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life. By the fulness of the Spirit committed to him, he spoils the strong man armed, and sets captive souls free. "Being made free from sin, ye become servants of righteousness; ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." The Jews despised Christ because he gave this spiritual liberty, rather than deliverance from the Roman yoke. But if they had obtained the object of their wishes and their hopes, what would they have gained? Opportunity to include their pride and love of the world. But Christ gives freedom from these hateful chains.

Now liberty after slavery is liberty indeed. This day the emancipated sons of Africa declare, "We know it by delightful experience." "No longer driven by the lash to excessive consuming toil, for another's benefit, and not our own, we labour, not with unwilling mind and tortured limb, but go forth, with songs, to perform the task we have chosen for our own interest." "The hope of reward sweetens labour, when in all labour there is profit." This is liberty, to dread no lash; to hear no horrid threats; to shudder at no new mode of torture; but to reflect that all these torments vanished when we became free. Thus the believer in Jesus is free indeed, for he is not under the law of the covenant of works, a hard task-master; but freely justified by faith, he serves the Lord with a willing mind, in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. Nor is he now tormented with fear of wrath, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." He, therefore, is the true emancipator of the slave, the liberator of the world.

II. The treatment which the liberator receives is now exhibited.

When the Romans, having conquered Antiochus, proclaimed, by a herald, in the assembly of the states, that Greece was free, her sons rent the air and shook the earth with the shout of liberty. The Son of God, who here proclaims a nobler freedom, deserves a more joyous welcome, but unhappily meets with ungrateful rejection. For slavery unfits men for freedom, blots out of the mind the generous idea, and thus the curse would perpetuate itself. We have here an affecting exhibition, both of the *spirit* and also of the *conduct*, of the rejectors of Christ our great liberator.

1. The spirit of those who reject the author of our liberty.

"We are Abraham's seed," said the Jews, bridling up with arrogant disdain; "we were never in bondage to any man: then how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" What! had Abraham's seed never been in Egypt, the house of bondage? Had they not been captives in Babylon, for seventy years? Were they not, at that moment, subject to the Roman yoke? As these were facts too notorious to be denied, some have concluded that spiritual bondage was what they disclaimed. But as Abraham's seed might in this sense be slaves, and it was manifest that their own scriptures speak of wicked descendants from the father of the faithful, we may suppose they referred to that more complete slavery, which was common among ancient nations, and which approached the state of the Africans in our colonies. This, even the Israelites in Egypt did not endure, nor their descendants in Babylon; and certainly the men who were now contending with Christ were not held in such slavery by the Romans. In each of these three periods of their history, the Jews were treated as a captive nation, and not as personal slaves in the lowest sense. But what did that avail? "For he that committeth sin," says Christ, "is the slave of sin;" not meaning to say, that unless we are sinless we are slaves. For "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not;" though every good man may say, with the Apostle, "We, brethren, are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free." Christ is here speaking of habitual practice, as when we say of a man, he swears, he lies, he steals: such a one is sin's slave, let him make whatever pretensions he may to liberty.

But the same mistaken pride of freedom provoked them to say, in reply to the charge, "Ye do the deeds of your father;" "Abraham is our father." Those who have conversed much with the modern Jews, have observed in them the same pride

of descent. Observing what lofty things are said of Abraham, as God's friend, and heir of the world, they boasted of his blood in their veins, and even went so far as to fancy that on this account, they could not be cast into hell. To confute this ruinous conceit, our Lord exhibited a rich man in hell, crying, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me." For what madness is it in a wicked child to boast of a pious father! To have degenerated from a noble stock, is to become a disgrace to our parents, and expose ourselves to the reproach cast upon the proud apostate angel, " How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" They who were born in genteel or noble families, and have sunken into poverty, often pride themselves on their descent, when they have nothing else to boast of; and they who, born of God's friends, and nourished in his house, have become Ishmaels, outcasts from the holy covenant, sometimes cry, "We have Abraham for our father." But Christ reproaches these persecuting Israelites, for doing the deeds of another father. Stung to the quick, they exclaim, "We were not born of fornication, we have one father, even God." As the law of God branded adultery and fornication with infamy, the Jews considered the offspring of such crimes as infamous. Not, however, that they now confined their attention to these, in the literal sense, as is plain from their calling God their father. But they revolted at the charge of being an adulterous brood; because they had learned from the prophets, that idolatry was a species of whoredom, so that Isaiah calls the children of the idolatrous Jews, "the seed of the adulterer and whore." Having been cured of their propensity to worship idols, by the terrible chastisement of the captivity in Babylon, they now gloried in having but one God as their father: yet here again they boast of him who was theirs only by profession; for "if God were really your father," says Christ, "ye would love me." But such is the false, vain, proud, hypocritical, persecuting spirit of those who reject the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free, that we have now to consider,

2. The conduct of the rejectors of true liberty.

[&]quot;You seek to kill me," says our Lord, to these Jews! What

a return to him who proclaimed liberty to the captives! They were urged on by him who was a murderer from the beginning, to fly at their benefactor, and stab at him who would have knocked off their chains. They hated him for telling them the truth concerning their slavery to sin. This did not Abraham; for he, being a pattern of faith in God's word, is made the father of all who believe the truth; but Satan, their father, was the father of lies. Jesus challenged them to convict him of any sin that could make his testimony suspected, and they durst not accept his challenge. What an exhibition of depravity, to aim at the innocent life of him, who came to set them free from the worst bondage!

This day, the great liberator has won a glorious victory over slavery. We cannot but feel that we live in extraordinary times; though some may say, this is not only a trite remark, but more specious than solid, or true. I know that our conceit of our own importance makes us magnify the times in which we live; so that former ages have said, and future generations will say, the same of their days, and thus, by making all times extraordinary, we shall prove that none are in reality so, -since, without a valley there can be no mountain. Still, I assert, that this day is as extraordinary as it is auspicious; for in no age of the world has a nation done such a deed as we now celebrate—to give liberty to all its slaves; and this, not by merely saying, "They shall be free," and, making no costly sacrifice ourselves, leave others to stand to the loss; but by consenting to pay the price of twenty millions, that we may confer this boon on the wretched captive. We exult in this event,

1. On account of the guilty origin of slavery.

It is the offspring of war, and therefore is the cursed child of a cursed parent. The mother was the offspring of sin, and the daughter is the parent of sorrow. Many have, indeed, been made slaves by those whom the Scripture calls "men stealers," and whom it brands with infamy, by classing them with thieves, adulterers, and murderers. But this more private crime had never been committed had not war first made men slaves. When the depravity which sprung from the

fall, armed man against his brother, as Cain against Abel, those whom the victor did not kill, he seized as prisoners, and then the question arose, what shall be done with them? The answer was, keep them as bond-slaves for life; and thus the greater part of the servants in ancient times were prisoners of war. Christianity, which should have extinguished wars, has but mitigated its horrors, by introducing the modern practice of detaining prisoners till, at the conclusion of the war, they are exchanged for those who had been taken by the opposite party.

It has been pleaded, that the slavery inflicted on the sons of Africa was a merciful thing; because their countrymen would otherwise have killed the prisoners whom they took in battle. If this were true, it would only prove that "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel;" for we have preserved them for a life more bitter than death. But the plea is hollow and false, since it was the demand that created the supply; and our eagerness to purchase the prisoners awaking the cupidity of princes, lighted up the flames of war in Africa, which has been rendered warlike, barbarous, and desolate, wherever the slave trade has approached. Remote from that curse, the interior of Africa is far more peaceful, humane, cultivated, and happy. On the heads of the Europeans lies the double guilt of first lighting up war's infernal fires, and then of handing over its wretched captives to slavery. We created the crime by giving a bounty on its effects, and purchasing the prisoners as the lawful property of the warrior; so that slavery, cradled in wickedness, was in its very origin our shame. O God of mercy, now that thou hast given us grace to put away the sin, blot out the guilt from the book of thy remembrance!

The horrible effects of slavery should cause us to exult in its extinction. The child of sin has ever been the parent of sorrow. Hundreds of prisoners were brought down to the coast, tied together with ropes, as horses for the market, or oxen for the slaughter, and sold to our merchants, whose ships went regularly to receive the wretched cargo. There parents were torn from their children, husbands and wives

from each other's embrace, and all the finest fibres of the heart were burst asunder, when one was sold to this merchant and another to that, and driven on board, to go they knew not whither. Such were their yearnings after their kindred, such their longings for their country, and their horror of banishment and slavery, that they often sought relief by plunging into the sea. On board the ships, they were stowed by hundreds between decks, in spaces scarcely sufficient to lie down; and lest they should perish by suffocation in the confined air of a hot climate, they were brought up daily on the decks, not for their relief, but for their master's gain; and except they were narrowly watched, they escaped from the tyrant's grasp in the jaws of the devouring deep. A regular calculation was made of the numbers to be lost on the passage, whose price was to be made up from the labour of those that remained.

Arrived in the West Indies, new agonies awaited the wretched slaves. For if a parent and child, or husband and wife, landed on the same spot, their hopes were often mocked, and their wounds torn open to bleed afresh, when one planter bought the parent or husband, and another the child or the wife. In despair they sometimes refused to eat, in spite of all the torments that ingenuity could enable cruelty to inflict. A slave owner gave this testimony to the Government: "There is one of my slaves, once a fine healthy young man, who, by pining after his country and his kindred, is reduced to a skeleton, till my heart sickens at the sight of him. So may the Father of mercies deal with my children, if ever I have any thing more to do with that cursed trade."

All this cruelty was perpetrated to doom its victims to labour so severe, that slavery is defended by this horrid plea, "No free man will, for any price, endure the toil." Driven out to the field each morning by the cart-whip, they were compelled to labour under a vertical sun; the females and the feeble to keep stroke with the males and the strong; and at night were rewarded with hard fare, and often with tortures and threats, till life became an intolerable burden.

But even all this misery was little, compared with the

wickedness that slavery creates. If "oppression will make a wise man mad," what horrible passions must such treatment have kindled in the breasts of ignorant heathens! Their masters, too, armed with absolute power, were encouraged, by the assurance of impunity, to commit all uncleanness with greediness. Men who were the slaves of their own lusts, having absolute dominion over females, set chastity at defiance, and then sold the fruit of their own illicit intercourse into slavery; for such fathers were more cruel than the ostrich, which, though it neglects, does not torture its young.

One thing only was wanting to constitute finished iniquity, and that the slave holder took care to supply—the persecution of the soul. The cup of consolation which the Gospel holds out to the most wretched, was dashed from their parched lips. The glad tidings of salvation by Christ. which might have turned the curse into a blessing, and rendered the slavery of the body the means of true liberty to the soul, they were forbidden to hear. The enmity of the carnal mind against Christ and his people, the slave owner displayed in all its fury; and the severest tortures were inflicted on the negroes for no other crime but that of going to hear the Gospel of Christ. The benevolent and heroic men who had quitted the land of liberty, and thrown themselves among scenes of horror, that they might pour a divine balm into the bleeding heart, were rewarded with the treatment due to criminals; and our Baptist and Methodist. missionaries were thrown into prisons, among the vilest of mankind.

As the mother country forbids persecution, mockery was added to insult and injury; for a law was passed to give liberty to preach to the negroes, provided it were not between sun-rise and sun-set, for that would hinder them from their work; nor between sun-set and sun-rise, because that would be dangerous to the public peace. Thus men, who called themselves Britons, Christians, Protestants, branded their souls with infamy which Mahomedans and Papists would have abhorred; for these encouraged slaves

to embrace their faith, by emancipating the convert, or greatly lightening his bonds. But let us give glory to God, that he hath made the wrath of man to praise him.

For how wonderful is that Providence which this day terminates these horrors and these crimes! Long has been the struggle against slavery, and glorious is the victory. The patriotic Granville Sharpe first obtained the decision of Lord Mansfield, that no man, of whatever colour or clime, can be a slave in the British Isles. The Society of Friends, to their lasting honour, commenced the war against the trade in slaves; and when Clarkson had enlisted the press against this nefarious traffic, Wilberforce employed his mighty eloquence to induce the senate to decree its extinction. Vain, however, were all the efforts of the friends of man, till Mr. Charles Fox improved his short-lived power as prime minister of Britain, and employed the last moments of his life, by carrying the bill for the abolition of the slave trade. From this hour, slavery itself should have expired; but it lingered many years, till at length, the persecution of the missionaries supplied the last drop, which made the full cup of vengeance run over. "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved," said the Apostle, "the Jews filled up their sins, that wrath might come upon them to the uttermost." The masters said, "slaves shall not be Christians;" "then," said Christians, "negroes shall not be slaves." The Christian public was roused to put forth its latent energy, and Lord Grey, the premier, was the hon-oured minister who abolished slavery, as his friend, Mr. Fox, had abolished the slave trade. Twenty millions were given to compensate the masters for the loss of what was called their property; and a sort of intermediate state, under the name of apprenticeship, was introduced for a term of years. But some of the colonies have abandoned that claim to a mock apprenticeship; others, it is hoped, will make the slaves immediately and entirely free. With all the deductions which we see and deplore, there still remains enough to demand our devout gratitude. Let us, however, lie low before God, deeply penitent that such a crime ever stained

the annals of our land and our age; and that we were so slow to put away the iniquity; for the barren pity that did nothing, was worth nothing. Let us bring forth fruits meet for repentance. We have not done our duty to the slave, when we have made him free, but are bound to employ every means to rescue him from the wretched and debasing consequences of having been a slave. The millions paid to the injurer, is a trifle light as air, compared with what we owe to the injured. It has been justly remarked, that the compensation was paid to the wrong party; that it was the slave who should have been paid for having been deprived of his liberty, and for the labour wrung from him without wages. Yet I would pay an oppressor for doing justice, rather than leave my brother subject to his grasp, while I am disputing about the equity of the claim. The slave, however, must receive compensation, for he cannot afford to forego his claim. It will be to our honour, as Christians, to imitate our Lord, who answered for crimes not his own, paid the debt which others owed, and said, "Then I restored that which I took not away." For who so fit to imitate this sublime example, as those who are reaping the benefits of it in their own forgiveness and salvation?

But how can we repay the injured negro, except by making him acquainted with that Gospel, which will render liberty a real blessing, by making the soul free from sin? Such is the curse attendant on slavery, that it makes men unfit to be free. The slave holder, attempting to profit by his own crime, said, "The slaves were not fit for freedom, which would be a curse to them." We knew it; but we knew also, that, if we yielded to the argument of the oppressor, he would take care that the slave should never be liberated but by death; for "there the servant is free from his master, and hears not the voice of the oppressor." It is, however, not the less true, that much is yet to be done, to render the liberty we have given a real blessing. Had not a Satanic war been raised against evangelizing the negroes, the work had already been half done. But now we have almost every thing to do. Whatever evils may follow upon emanci-

pation, they will not be the consequences of liberty, but of the previous slavery, and of the heathenism in which the Africans have been forcibly held. This, then, we must labour to counteract. Where we have sent them the tormentor, with the chain and the lash, we must send the instructor, with the Bible and the cross, following him with our most fervent prayers. Henceforth shall liberty, genuine, rational, Christian liberty, spread her broad adamantine shield, and wave her peaceful, yet victorious banner, over all. Education shall form the rising race, which there springs up rapidly to mature and vigorous life, for its new and nobler destination. Where the fathers crouched and trembled at the lash, and were trodden to the dust under the iron hoof of the tyrant, the sons and daughters shall stand erect, and commence the endless march of improvement, with freedom's lofty, manly port; religion, all pure, and peaceful, and benign, the religion of Jesus, who has redeemed from bondage men of every colour and every clime, shall make the negro snow-white by the blood of the Lamb, and teach him to forgive the injuries of ages, freely, heartily, joyously; forgiving, because he is himself forgiven. Where heathenism, to which they were doomed who were forbidden to hear the Gospel, held her foul orgies, there shall Christian churches rise and hold their holy convocations, to learn the finest thoughts of the Parent of reason, and to receive the impress of that Holy Spirit, that stamps us with the image of Him who is the model of every virtue that is pleasing to God, or profitable to man. The selfdenying missionary, who has sowed in tears, shall now reap in joy, and he that went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall come again rejoicing. Our Smith, with the noble army of martyrs who fell in that holy war, shall exult to behold from the skies, how fruitful the field of the missionaries has become, by their blood. Sable churches shall hear the glad word; "Though the Lord gave you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not your teachers be removed into a corner any more." Bishops and deacons of their own hue shall recall to the church the days

of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, those African fathers, whose praise is in the churches, and whose works instruct the polished European divine of the nineteenth age. The productions of the press shall attest how fit for the chair of the instructor was that race, that was once deemed equal to nothing but the labour of the brute beast.

Abundance, the offspring of industry, divinely blessed, shall exalt the Christian negro to stations of honour and of influence in civil life. He who was put out of the pale of human laws, and made a thing, not a person, as much a chattel as a horse, or a plough, shall legislate for society, and bear the mace of state. Black merchants in Africa, shall consign their goods to brother merchants in Europe, Asia, and America, who will deem themselves honoured by the confidence and the correspondence of those who, like the traders of Tyre, are princes. Ships commanded and manned by blacks, shall visit our ports with the riches of those who, once, could possess nothing, but were themselves possessed by others. The navy of the liberated blacks shall enter the harbours of Africa, their father land, to bear the glad tidings of that Gospel, which, at last, made Britain just, and negroes free, and which, by rendering them free indeed, turned the curse into a blessing. Thou, much-injured Africa, the grave of European missionaries, shalt receive life and liberty from thine own sons. Barbarized by us, thou shalt be civilized by them. "They departed from thee for a season, that thou shouldest receive them for ever;" not now as heathens, captives, slaves; but as Christians, freemen, apostles, benefactors. Thy sable sons in East and West shall sit under their own vine and fig tree, or in thy mango and palm groves, none daring to make them afraid, while, reading the book of life, they exult to find thy name engraven in the page. Remembering how the soil on which they tread was watered with their father's tears and blood, the sons shall taste a double joy and their hearts exclaim, "Great liberator of our race, thou who hast worn the chains to set us free, all this we owe to thy victorious grace."

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LECTURE XVIII.

CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Jони viii. 12—19. ix. 5.

That light and the sun are not identical, is universally admitted; for the sun is now believed, perhaps we may say known, to be a dark body, like the earth, though surrounded by a luminous atmosphere, which sometimes presents breaks, or openings, through which the body of that luminary is so far visible, as to give rise to the saying, "there are spots in the sun." From the hour that man first opened his eyes, he has virtually exclaimed, with the poet,

"Hail, holy light, offspring of heaven first born;
Or of the Eternal, coeternal beam!
May I express thee unblam'd; since God is light,
And never but in unapproached light,
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee?"

Though this first-born of created blessings has been the lasting theme of philosophical research, the utmost we can say, at the present day, is, that we hope we are beginning to know it. Whether it is a peculiar element, distinct from every other, or whether it is but a modification of fire, or of that which is termed the electric or galvanic fluid, has been much disputed. It was generally admitted that it proceeded in right lines from the luminous body; and, since Newton's time, it was supposed to consist of rays of the different colours of the rainbow, and latterly it has been found, that only some of these rays convey light, and others colour, and others heat. A new doctrine is now beginning to gain ground, that light is but a vibration of an ether or subtle substance, which pervades all nature.

Amidst all this mystery, which has enveloped its essence, the simplest child is acquainted with the effects of light, and these have commended it to the admiration of all, as the finest production of the Creator's power and skill. Our sense of its worth, far from being diminished, is rather enhanced, by the mysteriousness of its nature; while this renders it a more fit emblem of that Saviour, who here says, "I am the light of the world." Notwithstanding all the mystery that hangs over his glorious person, we may clearly understand the effects he produces, and the blessings he bestows on this dark world. This he here asserts and confirms.

I. The assertion of the Redeemer's glory. "I am the light of the world."

The connexion of this passage with the preceding history, is not easy to discover. It stands as an appendage to the story of the woman taken in adultery, which I have not introduced into the Lectures on the history of Christ's life, because I am doubtful of its genuineness, as it is wanting in the best manuscripts and most ancient versions. I consider this discourse as a continuation of that in the seventh chapter. Here, however, Christ informs us,

1. What he is to us; "The light of the world."

This is virtually saying, "I am to the moral world, what the sun is to the physical." In many texts, Christ is called the sun. This, like light, is at once most splendid and most useful, and we should make the most practical application of the symbol. The use of light is, in all languages, and in writings on all themes of human knowledge, very extensive; as it is applied, not merely to the physical element by which we see objects, but also to *knowledge*, by which the mind apprehends things, and to the moral sense by which we duly appreciate the relative worth of principles, and discern our own duties. In this discourse, the physical element will be regarded merely as the means of illustration; and the intellectual, but especially the moral application of light will be our proper theme. Christ, therefore, will be seen to be the light of the world, if you consider how he exchanges its

ignorance for knowledge; turns its gloom into cheerfulness; its sterility into fruitfulness; and its deformity into beauty.

Christ is the light of the world, for he changes its ignorance for knowledge.

This is the chief idea intended to be conveyed by the figure. We are all aware, that, in the dark, we are kept in ignorance of objects around us; which immediately present themselves, and are familiarly known, when light is let in upon them. This whole world is in darkness concerning the most important of all objects of knowledge, God; for "though what may be known of him, is clearly seen by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, yet our foolish heart is darkened, and we are become vain in our imaginations; and men have changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

Thus, "darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Men are "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." They have no just views of God; are blind to the glory of his moral character and government; and know not that which is of so much importance for a sinner to know, how man may be just with God. With respect to these most important subjects, "we grope," to use the prophet's language, at noon day, as if we had no eyes." The heathen world presents the grossest ignorance; but there is a learned ignorance, equally ruinous, though more specious.

But what a change light creates! It seems to call a new world into existence; since what we do not see, is as if it did not exist, and the first discovery of an object, is to us its first existence. To this dark world, Christ is the light. He was promised as "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's Israel." John, therefore, having derived wisdom from that bosom, on which he leaned, opened this gospel with an account of Christ's original glory, as the life which was the light of men, which, shining in darkness, was not comprehended by it; but proved itself, by coming into the world, to

be the light of all, not of a nation, but of a world. He it is, who shows us our souls, and their worth, "bringing life and immortality to light." He is the image of the invisible God, exhibiting him in his true glory, as "a just God and a Saviour; just, and justifying him that believes on Jesus." "This is the light of life," for whosoever sees it lives; according to the word of Christ, "This is the will of the Father who sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life." He who sees in Christ the true character of God, as "the justifier of the ungodly that believeth in Jesus;" "passes from death to life, and shall never come into condemnation." A new spiritual world is called up to the view of the Christian, when Christ opens our understanding to understand the Scriptures, and shows the wondrous things contained in the Divine Word. Then the humblest Christians see a whole moral universe that is unknown to the most profound philosophers; and knows to whom we may truly apply the flattering compliment, once paid to Newton—

- " Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night; God said, Let Jesus be, and all was light."
- A. He exchanges our gloom for gladness.
 The state of the blind is touchingly described by him whose eulogy on light we have quoted:
 - "Seasons return, but not to me returns

 Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n, or morn."

We should pity the blind; for even if they are habitually cheerful, they have many a moment of deep depression. When it is said, "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart," it is implied that gladness waits for light. For nothing is more common, either in sacred or profane writings, than to put darkness for gloom, and light for cheerfulness. The gloom of this world, in consequence of our darkness and ignorance of God, is best known by those who have lived among idolaters. Often the tear of benevolent sorrow for the miseries of the heathen,

steals down the cheek of the missionary who is labouring to turn them from darkness to light. But, in our own case, it may be well known, if we look back to the time, when, as the Apostle says, "ye knew not God;" for then "ye had no hope," when "ye were without God in the world." To a rational man, awake to his true interests, it must be unutterably gloomy, to be compelled to call the author of his being, the arbiter of his doom, "the great unknown." He that can utter this, without a sigh from the centre of his soul, must be insincere, or insane. All consciousness of ignorance is painful; but not to know God, is to be ignorant of all that is most worth knowing.

This dreary sense of ignorance is exchanged for gladness, when we see the glory of God as revealed in the face of Jesus Christ; for then we exclaim, "How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty! whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee." The Apostle exults to say, "Our eyes have looked on the only begotten of the Father, and seen him full of grace and truth." To behold God supremely lovely and glorious in holiness, and still to see him smile on us, as we do when Christ gives us the light of life, is to find this state of being transformed from a dungeon to a palace, from the antechamber of hell to the porch of heaven. The unhappy prisoner of the Bastile, once immured in its dungeons from the light of heaven, but now brought forth to look around again on the fair face of nature, and drink in the gladdening beam, is but a faint image of the soul called forth from ignorance of a pardoning God to see him rich in grace, smiling and saying, "Fear not, for I am thy salvation. I have blotted out thy sins as a cloud, and thy trangressions as a thick cloud."

Christ transforms sterility into fruitfulness.

The identity of light and electricity, if admitted, easily accounts for the influence of light on the vegetable world, which rapidly advances, after lightning has poured the electric fluid on the fields. Seeds just sown will spring up immediately after they have been electrified. We all know

how creation languishes, on the departure of the sun, when, during the winter season, its beams glance aslant over the north. Its return from the south brings spring and summer, when it darts the more direct beam; and all created things awake up to renewed and redoubled life. But we are not all so well acquainted with the influence of mental darkness, or aware of the moral barrenness to which the Apostle's charge alludes, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; for it is a shame to speak of the things done by the Gentiles in secret." But the light makes manifest how dark and how evil was their state. The world, unilluminated by Christ, is a scorched heath, cursed with barrenness of all good. "What fruit had you in those things of which ye are now ashamed? I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good," says the Apostle.

in my flesh, there dwelleth no good," says the Apostle.

But Christ, the light of the world, causes us "to bring forth fruit unto God." "Then shall the earth yield her increase, when God, our own God, shall bless us with the knowledge of Christ. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." "To you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall." This is no mere theory; for facts prove that, as long as men are ignorant of Christ, they yield to God no fruits of holy obedience, but are barren as the flinty rock or gloomy deep; while those who know God as their Saviour, consecrate to him their being, with all their choicest powers, and live "fruitful in every good word and work." What but the light of Christ has given to the world all the most benevolent institutions, and maintained them in lively vigorous operation? Would any thing but Christianity have elicited the act of justice which we have just contemplated, the emancipation of the African slaves?

By giving beauty for deformity, Christ proves himself the

light of the world.

How much we owe to light for disclosing to us the beauty of creation! All are sensible that we should not be acquainted with its fair forms and lovely colours,

if there were no light to show them. But not all are aware that the colours themselves are created by light. Plants that are shut up in darkness, if they grow at all, have nothing but a pale sickly hue. To produce this, nothing more is necessary than to exclude the light, which gives to all nature its healthful green, its bright scarlet, its deep blue, with all the other hues that adorn the flowers, and make the vegetable world a present of beauty from the bounteous Creator, to charm the eye of man. The light which exhibits its own colours in the rainbow, gives these to the living plants which drink in the solar beam.

Well, therefore, may Christ say, "I am the light of the world;" for what is the moral world but one vast blank, all dull and deformed, without the knowledge of Christ? The negation of every moral excellence, of all spiritual loveliness, is followed by the presence of all odious tempers and characters, which overspread the moral world, in proportion as Christ is unknown. The virtues of the heathen were called by Augustine, "splendida peccata;" and though he has been, for this, fiercely arraigned as an uncharitable bigot, we must not only maintain the truth, but extend its application to the virtues of all men who are without Christ. For neither we, nor our works, present to the moral governor and judge anything on which his eye can rest with complacency, while we are out of Christ; since nothing is done for God or his glory, and nothing is conformed to the holy law, which is the rule of all goodness, the standard of all moral beauty. The world of souls is, without the light of Christ, like the physical world bereft of the light of the sun.

But when her light is come, Zion is said to put on her beautiful garments. "All we, beholding with open face as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord;" as nature is adorned with the colours of the light. "The beauty of holiness" is a phrase of Scripture well understood by Christians who have any true taste for the sublime and beautiful in morals; and when we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," we are made comely through his comeliness put upon

us. That most profound moral philosopher, President Edwards, musing on the Christian character, in a rural walk, on a fine summer's day, says, "I thought that the Christian was like one of these solitary beautiful flowers, that drinks in the light of the sun, rejoicing in his beams, but asking no other eye than that of the Creator, to see and enjoy its charm." Who that has an eye to discern, or a heart to relish, moral beauty, does not see it in Stephen, dying for Christ, and praying for his murderers, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; and lay not their sin to their charge?" Where can such a spirit be seen, but where the prayer of the Psalmist has been offered and answered, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us?"

From this exposition of Christ's own glory, we pass to consider,

2. His follower's bliss. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Our Lord speaks of his disciples as following him. In this, he probably refers to his being constantly attended in his tours through town and country by the twelve Apostles, or the seventy Evangelists, and frequently by a multitude, who hung on his lips. But I suspect he may have some reference, too, to the figure which he here employs, and thus may allude to the habit of plants, which follow the light. If a vegetable were placed in a dark room, into which the light were admitted by one small aperture, the plant would turn towards that single beam; and if that part which had bent towards the light were turned away, the plant would bend itself back again, still making an effort to find the light. From this habit, one plant has received the name of heliotrope, and another tourne-sol, and sun flower; as these names signify turning to the sun. It is curious and instructive to observe how the vegetable world proclaims its regard for the sun, that great depository, or agent of light. Learn, Christians, how you should turn towards Christ, and follow the light of the world, as the needle turns to the pole, and pursues it, whatever disturbance may create a change of direction. To follow Christ into the holiest of all, is the only way to draw nigh to God with acceptance; to follow him into the church, is to enter by the true door into the sheep-fold; to follow him in the path of holiness, is the way to walk before God unto all pleasing; to follow him through death, is to meet it as its conqueror; to follow him into heaven, is to appear there as a welcome guest.

Such followers shall not walk in darkness! It is true that there are those "who fear the Lord and obey the voice of his servant, and walk in darkness, and have no light;" but to the upright, there ariseth the light of gladness in the darkness of affliction. That light which we have seen Christ throwing on this world, preserves his followers from the fearful state of which this Apostle speaks; "If a man says that he loves God and walks in darkness," that is in sin, "he is a liar, and the truth is not in him; for God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Those who follow Christ, therefore, do not walk in the guilty gloom of iniquity; but have "come to the light that their deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."

For "they shall have the light of life." Of the region of the dead, Job says, "it is a land of darkness as darkness itself;" but in the land of the living, the light of day shines and animates them to all the activity which we call vivacity or liveliness. During the darkness of night, all the world seems dead; but after the sun rises, the birds begin to flutter and warble, the busy hum of life is heard in the city, and all things show the connexion between light and life. This is seen in the church. Those who follow Christ, walk after the sun, and have the cheering light of a reconciled God, who gives them that animation of soul which renders this the light of life, or vital light; while it will prove at last what Cyril calls it, light that has power to lead to life eternal. This is the bliss of following Christ, that it will conduct us into the inheritance of the saints in light, in God's presence, where there is fulness of joy and life for evermore. There the light of immortal life will be shed on the blessed, from the Redeemer's luminous and illuminating countenance; "for the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to

shine in it, for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

II. Our Lord confirms his assertion by the double testimony given to his glory. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is true; and my Father bears witness of me." The Pharisees, who were ever on the watch to oppose and degrade our Lord, offended by his assertion, and unable to say any thing else against it, pretended that his testimony must be false, because he uttered it himself. In ordinary cases, indeed, "let another praise thee, and not thine own lips;" but to God and his Christ, this rule does not apply, for how should we know the existence and glory of God, if he did not proclaim them himself? Hear, then,

1. Christ's defence of his own testimony.

"Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true; for I know whence I came and whither I go."

At first sight, this answer seems insufficient; because Christ's knowing whither he came and went, does not appear to be evidence to them. It is therefore suggested by Cocceius, that our Saviour here uses the term know, in the sense of the Hebrew verb in Hiphil, to make known, which certainly is the way in which this verb is sometimes employed in the New Testament: this would be a clear and satisfactory answer: "I show whence I came and whither I go; proving, by my works, that I came from heaven, and that I am returning thither again." Such a witness, like light, brings its own evidence with it, and should be believed, like God, on his own testimony. If they did not receive the witness, it was because they knew not whence he came; being ignorant, notwithstanding all their boasted knowledge, of the true Messiah, and of Christ's real origin, and mission, and destination. For their minds being carnal, judged after the flesh, and "the carnal mind understands not the things of the Spirit of God, neither could they know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Looking for a Messiah who should gratify their worldly desires, they regarded Jesus with contempt; because he appeared mean, and poor, and of a low origin, which was in their eyes enough to counterbalance all

the glory of his sanctity and grace, and all the weight of his miraculous works. To them, therefore, as blind men, the light did not bring its own evidence. Yet the fault lay not in the insufficiency of that evidence, but in the incompetency of those who pretended to judge of it. They judged and condemned him by a carnal decision, influenced by insufficient and unworthy reasons: he passed no such judgment, never condemning men after the flesh. He would not have judged the Pharisees to be wrong, because they were poor; neither did he now bow to their judgment, because they were the rich, and mighty, and popular party. In this sense, we take the words, "I judge no man," i. e. after the flesh, as ye do; though I am aware they may be taken in the sense of executing judgment: "if any man believe not my words, I judge him not, for I came not to condemn the world, but to save the world." Yet the connexion which determines the sense of words, leads me to conclude that the interpretation first proposed is the true one. Let us learn by this, the importance of the state of our minds, when we pass judgment on persons and principles.

2. His additional appeal to his Father's testimony.

"And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also:" 16—19.

If I judge, i. e., if I should judge, or when I judge, it is not as you, with carnal motives, but with a judgment that is infallibly true; for I am not the single human witness that you, in your false and precipitate judgment, conclude me to be. It is written in your law, "that the testimony of two men is true."* Here are two who are more than men. I am bearing witness of myself; but I am not what you

^{*} This is a quotation according to the sense rather than the letter of the law.—Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15.

suppose, a mere man, for I am that Son of God who am one with the Father, and who am always with the Father, and therefore stand not alone, but have the Father bearing witness with me. If, then, your law calls you to receive two earthly witnesses, how much more two heavenly ones? To this, the disputed text in John's epistle seems to refer.

This divine testimony elicited from the Pharisees a kind of challenge—"Where is thy Father?" hoping that if he produced him that was supposed to be the father of Jesns, Joseph of Nazareth, they would enjoy an opportunity of insulting over a poor carpenter. But our Lord replied, "Ye know neither me nor my Father. Ye are absolutely ignorant of my real Father, supposing that I am the son of Joseph; and ye are really as little acquainted with me, who am not the mere creature that you imagine. Had you known that I am the word made flesh, had you seen my true glory, as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, ye would have seen in me the Father's glory, and received the Father's testimony concerning me. Thus you might have arrived at the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

Lift up your eyes, then, to this light of the world, which by its own lustre, shows itself, and all things else. For this is the glorious property of light, to make itself known, and by itself every other object. Every one that sees light must know it, and cannot question whether it be a divine production; for it is a child of omnipotence, too much like the Father of lights to be mistaken for any thing else. Nor can Christ, if truly seen, be misunderstood; for there is a glory, a divinity, in his character, that tells who he is. All the deity shines in his countenance, and compels the beholders to say, "We have seen and borne witness, that this is the Son of God." In him we see the Father also, and the paternal character of the deity causes us to exclaim, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." By the same light every saving truth is seen; for this is the master key that unlocks each divine mystery.

We have been speaking to those who follow this light; but what shall we say to those who do not? That "they walk in darkness, and know not whither they go, because darkness has blinded their eyes." Ignorant of the true nature, beauty, and glory of God, which can be seen in Christ alone, you live without him in the world. Ah! if the "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, should shine into your hearts," how would you bewail these days, saying of them, "Let darkness cover them, and let them not come into the number of the months."

You might learn something of your present state, if you would avail yourselves of the imagery which Christ here employs, not merely for his own glory but for our good. The man who has been shut up from his birth in a dark dungeon, as Casper Hauser, of whom the contemporary press says so much, might hear others speak with raptures of the sun in its rising, and setting, and meridian glories; and conscious that he knew nothing of these, would bewail his blindness. Do you never think, when you read of Christ's glory in the Scriptures, or hear of him from living Christians, how insensible you are of that which sets the souls of others on fire?

But if you live and die in this state of darkness, what can it lead to but everlasting night, "the blackness of darkness for ever?" As it is said of the church in its most glorious state, the Lamb is the light thereof; what but dreary darkness and endless gloom must be the lot of those who are shut out of that beatific vision? And what else but exclusion must be the lot of the wilfully blind? Can we hope that God will admit to the central seat of his glory, where he displays himself in his Son, as the bliss of souls, those who have neither eyes nor hearts for such a sight? What reason, then, have you to cry with the blind men of whom we read in the gospel, "Son of David, have mercy on us. Lord, open our eyes that we may see?"

Christians, learn the sacred duty of seeking to diffuse the knowledge of Christ. For idolatrous nations pray, "Great Sun of righteousness, arise, bless this dark world with heavenly light." The word that reveals him, is translated into tongues

that never before uttered his saving name; and it is yours to bear it on living lips, to distant lands, that all the world may know him that is "the light of the world." What is more honourable to Christ, or more desirable for us, than that we, who have been illuminated by him, should make him known to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge? "This honour have all his saints," to attend the Sun of right-eousness, as his satellites, and reflect his light on a dark world.

Nor shall you labour in vain; for it was not an empty boast when he said, "I am the light of the world." Wide as the world is his domain. The greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to Christ. "From the rising of the sun, even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the gentiles." Already we see the sun going forth as "a bridegroom from his chamber, and rejoicing, as a strong man to run his race." Nations that had lain, for thousands of years, in the darkness of death, are waking up to the light of life. Let the success of past efforts stimulate to new exertions, and prompt to the hallowed vow, "We will never desist, nor relax, till Christ be the light of the whole world."

Finally, let us prepare for our eagle flight to the skies, there to gaze on the unveiled glories of this source of light. Before the incarnation, Christ was a sun not yet risen, though shooting his beams upward, to give to the church the twilight of the law and the prophets; during the life of Christ on earth, he was a sun risen amidst clouds and mists, which obscured his glory; but since his ascension to heaven, he shines as a meridian sun without clouds, to be gazed on by eyes that cannot be dazzled and never grow dim. Thither he invites you; stretch your wings, and rise buoyant in hope, and burning with love, at the sound of his voice; "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

LECTURE XIX.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Јони х. 1-18.

Who that knows the value and glory of Christ, can wonder that every office which implies wisdom, and kindness, and faithful care, and the exertion of beneficent power towards others, should be employed to express the relation he holds to the church? But though all these qualities are valued in the shepherd; as we have but a mean idea of this office. usually held by persons taken from the lowest ranks in life, and therefore badly paid, we may not so readily perceive the propriety of calling the Lord of glory by that name. We must, therefore, endeavour to enter into the ideas of the ancients, among whom the shepherd ranked far higher than with us, and who frequently called kings by that name; as one says, "whom they formerly termed shepherds, we call kings;" and the ancient church, in one of its sacred pastorals, has taught us to sing, "Jehovah is my shepherd;" "Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth." Under this title, therefore, the Messiah was promised. "The Lord God shall come with a strong hand; he shall feed his flock like a shepherd."

After Christ had uttered the discourse on which we are now entering, it naturally became a favourite image for the Saviour, of whom Paul says, "The God of peace brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Peter calls him "the shepherd and bishop of your souls." The most celebrated types of Christ, therefore, were those men who filled this office; as "David, who was taken from following the ewes," and Moses, who had before him, fed

the flock of his father-in-law, when called of God to feed Israel his chosen. Let us, then, pursue this divine discourse, and observe how it exhibits the good shepherd and his chosen flock.

I. The good shepherd.

Our Saviour was contending with the pharisees and false doctors, who set themselves in opposition to him, as if he intruded into the care of the flock, which belonged exclusively to them. But he assures them that he came into his office by the right way; not intruding, or "taking this honour to himself, but called of God, as was Aaron;" not climbing up some other way, as the thieves, the false shepherds. To him, the porter, who was a servant, or attendant on the shepherd, opened the fold. "To Christ gave all the prophets witness," honouring him as the shepherd of the church; while to the saints that "looked for redemption in Israel," John the Baptist acted in an especial manner, as a minister, who came to bear witness to him, "that all men might believe." As "the friend of the bridegroom, who rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice," John said, "This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." But, when the evil shepherds did not understand what Christ said of his own entrance into the fold, he changed his voice, and spake of himself, not only as the door to the sheepfold, but as the pastor; declaring explicitly, "I am the good shepherd;" or, as it may be rendered, the fair, lovely, or beauteous shepherd, that has surpassed all that poets have sung of the innocence and loveliness of pastoral life. Of the shepherd we may sing, "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips;" and of the flock, though it is a little one, it is precious in God's sight, consisting of souls worth more than worlds, and bought with no mean price, like silver and gold, but with the blood of the shepherd. Well may he call them his own sheep; and we adopt the words of the poet,

> "The shepherd of a glorious flock, But still more glorious he."*

^{* &}quot;Formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse."—Virgil, Eclog. 5.

Here he asserts his perfect knowledge of the flock, his faithful care and constant love towards it.

1. His perfect knowledge of the flock. "I know my sheep, and call them by name."

Voluntarily to enter on a public charge, and take upon ourselves the care of other persons, without knowing them, is to betray, not only ignorance and rashness, disgraceful to ourselves, but a recklessness that may be treacherous and cruel to those whom we ought to superintend, protect, and serve. The literal shepherd should understand the flock; the political should, like Solomon, seek a wise and understanding heart, that he may know how to feed the flock of men; but, of all others, he that becomes a shepherd of souls should obey the voice that says, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks."* What knowledge is requisite for the care of one soul, with all its overwhelming worth, its complicated character, its numerous and pressing necessities, and its infinite, because immortal, interests! But what shall we say of the knowledge of the whole flock of Christ, a multitude that no man can number, redeemed out of every nation and tongue under heaven? Yet in Christ "dwell all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." One of the flock, who had so wandered that others might reasonably have doubted his right to rank among the sheep, could appeal to this shepherd, saying, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." His appeal admitted, he was charged to feed the rest of the sheep, and the lambs too. Israel's shepherd knew the seven thousand hidden ones that had escaped the eye of Elijah, who spake as if he knew there was none left but himself. Is there a believer so obscure and reserved that he is not known to the shepherd, or a circumstance in the case of the meanest that has escaped Christ's vigilant eye and affectionate heart? All their names and sorrows are known, for they are in his book. If Cyrus prided himself in calling each soldier in his army by name,

^{*} Proverbs xxvii. 25.

saying, it was a shame, that, while a mechanic knew the names of his tools, a general should not know those of his soldiers; our shepherd has all his people's names on his heart, they are the gems on his breast plate.

Small as the flock of believers may be, when compared

Small as the flock of believers may be, when compared with the multitude of the wicked, they are too numerous for us to count, or to know. Yet Christ's knowledge extends farther than to be acquainted with all that believe and are now in the fold, for he says, "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold; nor do I pray for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word." What an eye is that which glances through all futurity, and sees all that will rise up to call him blessed in every nation and every age! For the time of the general calling of the greatest numbers of the church is yet to come, when he will "increase it with men as a flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts," when they drove the flocks, by hundreds of thousands, up to Jerusalem, to be presented at the altar of God. This is the joy set before the good shepherd, for which "he endured the cross and despised the shame," at which his heart exults, and over which his eye glistens with delight, to look down from the hill of Zion, and see a world of men his ransomed flock. Live, shepherd, and enjoy the prospect that fills thine omniscient eye, that gladdens thy benevolent heart, and will proclaim the triumphs of thine omnipotent arm.

Fling away thy mask, then, O hypocrite! thou that hast entered into the flock to which thou dost not belong. Put off thy sheep's skin, thou wolf, for what avail deceptive appearances, before the all-seeing eye of our shepherd, who knows his own sheep from all others afar off?

2. His faithful care of the flock.

The superintendence of a flock of sheep is a more serious, arduous affair than those of us who look ignorantly on may imagine. It is no sinecure, but demands incessant watchfulness, night and day, and often requires, not only the most fatiguing toils, but the most dangerous risks of health or life. But he that "watches for souls, as one that must give an account," should be a labourer indeed; "night and day

labouring," says the Apostle, "that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Most other shepherds, however, receive their flocks collected to their hands, but our's has to call and gather them from the wide wilderness of the world and sin. A shepherd's voice has a peculiar, of the world and sin. A snepherd's voice has a peculiar, indescribable, commanding force over the sheep, and what voice is like that of our pastor? "The voice of the Lord is powerful: the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." It has the peculiar tone of divinity: it is the voice of him that "calleth things that are not as though they were," and gave birth to a world out of nothing. Thus he calls and transforms them, from dogs and swine, into sheep of his pasture! "He calleth them all by their names," as the ancient shepherds used to do.* Such a knowledge our shepherds also are said to have, being able to distinguish a sheep in a large flock by its face, though sheep to us seem to have no distinguishing feature. But wherever the chosen sheep are found (for sheep they are called by anticipation, on account of the election), Christ says, "He must bring them, and they shall hear his voice," which sinks down into their soul, as was seen when Jesus found Levy at the receipt of custom, and called him effectually away, by saying, "Follow me." You saw a ravening wolf going to scatter the flock of Damascus; you heard the shepherd call him by name, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" You behold him fall, gentle as a lamb, and go away, as an obedient sheep, into the fold, saying to the pastor, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" From one case learn all; for every chosen sheep is, in due time, thus called, as if by name, so personal does the gospel call prove to give us entrance; for by what other way could we venture in? He says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "For I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." When the great shepherd admits us "by the blood of the everlasting covenant," which bought the whole flock, we take our places

^{*} Theocritus represents his shepherd as calling one of his flock Conarus, another Cynatha, and a third Phalarus.

among them, by the best and highest right. For by the righteousness of Christ, we obtain our lot among the justified, who are owned as sheep, while the unbeliever is rejected among the goats. Into this door of the sheep, therefore, the believer enters, at the call of Christ, as a child, at the voice of its parent, into the door of his own house.

Then Christ proves to the sheep how well he knows them, entering into a familiar fellowship with them, and teaching them the way of the flock, and causing them to go in and out with constant freedom. For the fold is not a prison, but a place of perfect liberty; since, if "the Son make you free, then are ye free indeed." He takes care that they shall find pasture, giving them shepherds after his own heart, to feed them with knowledge and understanding. Having instituted his church, as a fold, he determines that it shall have pastors who bow to the voice, which says, "Feed the flock of Christ, which he has purchased with his own blood, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers." His Spirit he gives, to lead them into all truth, and his word he makes to nourish them, that, "they may grow thereby." For all the faithful sheep who listen to their shepherd's voice, shall sing, "Jehovah is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Christ, which he has purchased with his own blood, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers." His Spirit he gives, to lead them into all truth, and his word he makes to nourish them, that, "they may grow thereby." For all the faithful sheep who listen to their shepherd's voice, shall sing, "Jehovah is my shepherd, I shall not want."

But there is no instance of the Shepherd's care more honourable to him, or more profitable to us, than his taking the lead of the flock. "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them." This he did, by the pillar of cloud and fire, when he led them out of Egypt. He does not force them forward, by the goad, or the barking of the sheep-dog, into dangerous places, where he will not go himself; but, by his own example, he animates them to "follow him whither he goeth." The example of Christ, as exhibited in the four Gospels, is the mighty, holy, animating motive, that guides the flock "in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake." Who can do justice to the force of Christ's example over his own church? or to the goodness of that pasture into which it leads them? Let us be like our shepherd, and go where he goes; and we shall lie down amidst rich verdure, and be refreshed by pure and peaceful streams.

By this single shepherd, called the Arch-pastor, ἀρχι-ποιμὴν; by the force of his distinctive voice, and his unique example, all the ransomed will be brought to form one flock and one fold, under one shepherd. Their union to him unites them to each other. How can they be divided in heart, who are all bought with blood from the same heart? How can they be discordant in principle who catch their animating spirit from the same lips? How can they be of conflicting practice who all follow the same footsteps, and "come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, growing up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ?" What more is necessary to restore the divided flock, but to take away all foreign interference, and leave them to the guidance of their proper shepherd, who only has a right to act the chief shepherd in that flock which his blood alone has bought and his Spirit called? As his love seeks our unity, let us not cherish divisions; but, "speaking the truth in love, confess one faith, one Lord, one baptism."

3. Christ shows his constant love for the flock.

Mere knowledge does not suffice for the charge of those who are tender, timid, and exposed to danger. While the pretended shepherds of the Jewish Church, were no better than wolves, Jesus was that good, kind, beneficent, lovely shepherd, that has an omniscient eye, and an affectionate heart. For much of what he says of his knowledge, implies love, as when it is said, "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous," it means he approves it; and when he declares to the wicked, "I never knew you," he means I never regarded you with a love of complacency. Introduce a child to his parent, and say, "Do you know him?" he will smile and say, with a peculiar emphasis, "Yes; I know him.' But Christ's love is like his knowledge, perfect, as that by which the Father and the Son, know each other. "I know my sheep and am known of mine; as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father." Love brought him into office; he took not the oversight of the flock, "for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." He saw us doomed to death by sin, and came "that we might have life," by the sacrifice of his own. In

our own land, formerly, wolves abounded, and in many countries, even of Europe, they are still most destructive to the flocks. When the ravenous animals come in troops, it is dangerous to attack them; for they would seize and devour men and horses, as well as sheep. A hireling, therefore, who had no interest in the flock and did not care for it, seeing the wolf coming, would flee, and leave it to scatter the flock and devour many. So, also, would a thief, "that came only to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." But a faithful shepherd would stand up against the destroyer, even at the risk of life, as David says, "when keeping my father Jesse's flock, there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth."

The good shepherd came on purpose to "give his life for the sheep." Seeing us exposed to the "devil, who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour," and knowing that this was the just judgment of God, that we should be exposed to the fury of the tempter, to whom we had basely yielded; Jesus offered his own life, and gave it a ransom for the flock. The terrors of death, in its most appalling forms, though he knew all things that were coming upon him, did not deter him from saying, "If ye seek me, let these go their way, that it might be fulfilled, of all that thou hast given me I have lost nothing." The voice of eternal justice said, "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow; smite the shepherd." Our debt was exacted of him; and "he made his soul an offering for sin, that by his knowledge he might justify many, having borne their iniquities." That must be a good shepherd that giveth his life for the flock. How unlike the hireling that careth not for the sheep!

Prodigal of his own, he gives life to us abundantly, "more abundantly." But who can explain this? For he does "exceeding abundantly for us, above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." There is an overflowing of life in youth, which is often exhibited in the young Christian too. When first the regenerate feel the throbbing of this new life in their breasts, they have an indescriba-

ble solicitude about it. Their thoughts and affections, their frames and feelings, their elevations or depressions, their advancement or decline, their hopes and fears, are watched with so much of a slavish anxiety, that it would be hardly possible to go through life in this tremulous way. But they, at length, come to see that the keeping of their souls is in the hands of the good shepherd; that he, watching for their life, enters into all their feelings and interests, so that nothing that concerns them escapes him. They gather courage, and, in cheerful confidence, go on singing, "he maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me by the still waters, he restoreth my soul, and leadeth in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

While the flaming eye of the good shepherd, that darts through the very soul, terrifies and repels those who are not genuine sheep, it encourages and delights those who are, even when they have fallen or wandered. Paul comforts believers, amidst the apostacy of professors, by saying, "the Lord knoweth them that are his." It is, indeed, every man's duty to examine himself, to know, not only his state but his frame, his easily besetting sins, his dangers and temptations, his wanderings and corruptions; but there is far more confidence to be reposed in Christ's knowledge of us, than in our self knowledge; for we, alas! are short sighted, partial, easily deceived, and cannot have our eyes every where; but "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through all the earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them that trust him."

For this, Christ assures us, his Father loves him, because he laid down life that he might take it again, and live glorious as a shepherd of a blood bought flock. No man had power to take his life from him; but he laid it down of himself. This he showed by the manner in which he cried out in death, as in full strength, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." This was the high command he received of his Father, by obedience to which, even unto death, he justifies men. Lest this timid flock should be affrighted at the thought of the death of their shepherd, saying, What shall we do if he falls by the hands of the enemy? who

shall guard us, then, from the wolf or the lion? he tells them of his power to take his life up again, which none but a divine shepherd could do. The same command over death he again asserts; "in three days I will raise up this temple again. But he spake of the temple of his body." If his Father loves him for this, well may those to whom we now turn our eyes.

II. The ransomed flock.

It is described by numerous "similitudes," which, Jehovah says, "I have used by my prophets." It is not unworthy to be observed, that these are not such as indicate the showy and grand, or the sensual and self-indulgent, much less the fierce and cruel. It is not the peacock, or the war horse; not the dog, or the swine; and not the lion, or the tiger; but the dove, or the sheep; the meek and gentle, the pure and useful. Sheep, that were, by the law, reckoned clean animals, and chosen for God's altar, and that are a flock more useful than all others to man, are the favourite emblem of the disciples of Christ. It becomes us to study their character and know well their marks; as the owner has his own marks for his sheep, and it infinitely concerns us to ascertain that we belong to the flock. Many set up false signs, and claim to be the exclusive flock, saying, "the temple of the Lord are we; we are the church." But these may be the bleatings of the goats. Let us hearken to the shepherd. He describes his own sheep by their knowledge, their faith, and their practice.

1. By their knowledge, Christ's flock may be discerned. "I am known of mine; they hear not strangers, for they know not their voice."

Most would be surprised to see how a whole flock will look up, at the voice of the shepherd, and how well they understand its meaning. Nor is Christ's flock less intelligent and discerning. The voice that calls his sheep, pours a flood of light into their minds, and from that time, they learn to say, "It is the voice of my beloved!" Hearing his Spirit in the word, call them, as by name, they bow and say, "speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." They recognize the tone of

divinity, of truth, and grace in the word of God. "Ye received the word which ye heard of us, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God." There is a divine beauty and glory in the testimony of the Gospel, concerning the person of Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, his redemption as purchasing the church with his own blood, the way of salvation by him, as the door which we enter by faith, and the bliss of following his footsteps, that they never can mistake. "I am known of mine." If, therefore, we know not that voice of Christ in the Gospel, we have not on us the mark of Christ's sheep.

But if we have, we may be known by the negative sign, as well as the positive; not only by what we know, but by what we do not know—the voice of strangers. "Ye have not known the depth of Satan, as they speak," says Christ, to his faithful church. The fine theories of worldly philosophers, who would deceive us by "science, falsely so called;" and the specious reasoning of heretics, they meet by saying, "We know you not; we have not so learned Christ." Sheep, on hearing a voice, look up, and, after seeming for a moment to consider it, perceiving it is not their shepherd's, they return to their pasture and feed on quietly. Those who go after what is not the Gospel, and listen to the voice of strangers, brand themselves with the mark of another flock, that is not Christ's. To go to hear what is not the Gospel, is made by it a mark of perdition. "Cease, my son, to hearken to the voice that causeth to err from the way of understanding." "Take heed what you hear."

2. By their faith, Christ's flock may be known. "I am

the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

With a solemn addition, "Verily, verily, I say to you," the Saviour introduces the assertion, "I am the door." Thus you may know the true flock of the redeemed, by their entering into the fold. Whatever knowledge Christ may have of those who are sheep by election, and are not yet by effectual calling, of the fold (though they must hear his voice), we can know nothing of them. Our business is with those who enter into the fold; whether we desire to know if we ourselves

belong to them, or whether we wish to judge of others with whom we are called to hold communion. Do they enter by Christ, as the door? If they make themselves, that is their own righteousness, the way, goats they may be, but sheep they are not. Lost they may be, but saved in this state they cannot be. "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." The saved ones are the flock of God. "The Lord added to the church daily such as were saved." "He saved us and called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Why then stand hesitating at the door, that is set open before us, for this end, that we may enter in and be saved? Why do we not hear the voice of the shepherd within, saying, "Come; enter with a welcome?" Why do we, when we have believed his voice and entered by this door into the flock of the ransomed, hesitate and doubt whether we shall be saved? Why do we not believe his voice, saying to us, so positively, "Thou shalt be saved?" Do we need any thing more than his assurance that they who come to him shall have life, to inspire us with a perfect persuasion that we shall never perish? But, if by this, we may know that we have a portion with the flock of the ransomed, why do we not recognize, as sheep, all that have entered at this door? Is anything more necessary to give our brother a claim to our welcome, a title to our recognition of him as one of Christ's sheep, than that by which we know ourselves to be so? It is not our listening to a particular undershepherd, not our belonging to a certain part of the fold, not our taking another name that is not that of the whole flock-Christian, that entitles us to the fellowship of the saints and to the grateful salutation, "Grace be with them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, theirs and ours, peace be with them, and mercy, and on the Israel of God."

3. By their practice we may know Christ's flock: "They follow him, and go in and out and find pasture."

The shepherd is so like his own sheep in gentleness, that he is himself called the Lamb, whom they follow, "whither-

soever he goeth." They, therefore, who belong to his flock, must "put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering." For, if you are fierce and ravenous, biting and devouring one another, "glory not, and lie not against the truth," by pretending to be of Christ's flock. How is it, then, that for ages, men called Christians have deluged Europe with the blood of war; and priests, pretending to be shepherds, have led on to slaughter, in the name of him, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously?" Christ's church is not a flock of wolves. When all the world is Christian, men will "learn war no more." As for persecution, that offspring of pride and selfish cruelty, it is so abhorrent from the temper of the meek and benevolent Saviour, that it fixes on its authors a spot that is not the spot of God's children, and proves that a man is either not of Christ's fold, or is so low in evidence of belonging to it, that he cannot be known, either by himself, or others, to be any other than a wolf.

But love is so much the characteristic of the Shepherd of souls, that he who follows him must love both the Shepherd and the flock. For, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." This is the old commandment of the law which we had from the beginning; but is rendered new by the power of Christ. For, "if he laid down his life for us, we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." "Love is the bond of perfection," by which they are kept "one fold, under one shepherd." And is it possible that we should feel what we owe to him that laid down his life for the sheep, and not be all drawn so strongly towards him, the centre, as to be attracted towards all those who are the purchase of his blood and the object of his charge? It is impossible: sheep are gregarious, and none more so than the sheep of Christ.

The sheep "go in and out and find pasture." What

means then the complaint of some, that they can find no pasture? Is not this a confession, that we do not bear the mark of Christ's sheep? If we listen to the voice of the shepherd in his word, and feed on this in secret, we shall be led into the pastures of his grace in the church. But, if we become diseased, by neglect of secret devotion, no wonder that nothing in public suits our taste. When all is right between us and our Shepherd, we go into the closet, and the church, and feed in flowery meads by silver streams; we come out into the world, and find that, even there, he holds communion with us, in all the walks of life, and feeds us with knowledge and grace, by every thing we hear, or see, or suffer, or do. Souls need to be fed as well as bodies, and where no care is taken of the mind, see how it lies as an inanimate thing, within the body. But, when "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us, together with Christ;" then the soul feels its need of pasture, and cannot rest without it. In fact, the good Shepherd acts as such, chiefly by affording the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which operates on the soul, as the principle of life and health does on the body, by creating an appetite for food, and urging to continual efforts to obtain the supply we need. If truth is the food of minds, Christ, who is himself the truth, supplies us with all that which nourishes a soul raised to a new and divine life. In his word, this is found as herbage in the pasture, it is supplied for the use of the flock; but they still need a shepherd, to lead them to it and deal it out to them, according to their state and their wants; for without such care the silly sheep would work their own ruin. The chief Shepherd provides inferior pastors to feed the flock of God, as those that must give an account; and a large part of Christ's pastoral care is exercised in raising up others, "after his own heart, to take the oversight of the flock, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

Oh! beware lest this divine discourse close with you, as it did with those that first heard it. "These things Jesus spake, but they understood not what things they were that

he spake to them." They even said, "He has a devil and is mad; why hear ye him?" How melancholy is the state of those who hear not the voice of such a shepherd! What do they lose who lose his love, his pastoral care, his protecting might! Oh, ye "that are as sheep going astray, turn to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls;" for "he came that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly." Ye who are beginning to look with wishful eye to this lovely Shepherd, and his ransomed flock, and its fair pastures, say, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to lie down at noon." Hear him: "If thou knowest not, go thy way by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." Seek the communion of saints, attend on the ordinances of his grace, if you would behold the Shepherd of your souls; for "where but two or three of the flock are, there is he in the midst of them." Having found him, sing your pastorals with a grateful and joyous heart, as David has taught you in the twenty-third Psalm. Watch over your spirit, and your ways, in reliance on your Shepherd's faithfulness and grace, that the marks of his sheep may be conspicuous on your souls. Still look forward to the hill of Zion above, where "the Lamb shall lead his flock to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

LECTURE XX.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

LUKE X. 25-37.

"Do not write with a perfumed pen, upon the petals of a rose," says the Persian proverb; to which our homely proverbs are an echo, "Do not paint the diamond; nor hold a candle to the sun." To explain Christ's parables is often as needless and nugatory, as perfuming the rose, or painting the diamond, or illuminating the sun; for they are clearer than any explanations we can give, and more beautiful than any adorning which we can bestow. The rage for explanation has, indeed, often led to interpretations which have obscured the lustre of the diamond by a coating of paint. For the obvious design of this parable has been substituted a body of evangelical doctrine, that is much better learned from those clear doctrinal texts, which, by the same fanciful allegorizing, might be perverted from their real meaning; so that by an attempt to introduce the method of our salvation every where, we shall at length find it, with certainty, nowhere. Let us seek for the mind of the Spirit in each text; and we shall then feel, on the one hand, that faith rests on the explicit revelation of doctrines that bring salvation, and on the other, that its practice is guided by a clear light shining on the highway of holiness.

But shall these beautiful parables of our Lord be left unimproved, because they need not to be explained? Must the lessons of incarnate wisdom be excluded from our ministry, because they are too perspicuous to need our feeble torch? Shall obscurity be rendered essential to utility? No; in exact proportion as the parables need no explanation, they admit of more copious and more frequent application. Let us bend

our minds to the improvement of this beautiful parable in the following order:

I. Here is a flaming beacon, to warn us against that selfishness which Christ exposes to abhorrence.

I shall not enter into the inquiry whether this is exactly a parable, or an historical narrative of facts, which had really occurred; for we can have no proofs of the historical sense, but what arises from verisimilitude, which is in fact no evidence at all; since our Saviour's parables are all constructed on the principle of probability, which in the present case was so great that it produced all the effects of history, in silencing the lawyer that said "Who is my neighbour?"

To answer this question in such a way as to set at defiance all sophistical objections, our Redeemer exhibits, first, a Jew. For though this is not expressly asserted, it is implied by going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.* The Samaritans went not to Jerusalem, as the woman of Samaria said to the Redeemer, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ve say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The way from the Holy City to Jericho was across a desert, which was, at this time, when the Jewish state was falling into disorders, infested with thieves. These are said to have "stripped the man of his raiment, and to have revenged his resistance by wounding him, and leaving him in the desert, half dead." What a specimen of human depravity! Lion does not rage against lion, as man wars on man. But, while we blush for our race, to think that any of them should seek to clothe themselves, by stripping others naked, and should make a trade of robbery, leaving a fellowcreature half dead, to expire on the ground; what is this but a miniature picture of war? That profession which has been deemed so honourable, is but practising, on a large scale, what we so much condemn on the small. But, the selfishness which our Lord here designs to expose to infamy is embodied in the persons—

^{*} Campbell, with his usual boldness, renders the text, "A man of Jerusalem."

1. Of a priest. " By chance there came down a certain

priest that way."

The Jewish priests, however numerous, had but one place of worship in which they could officiate, the temple at Jerusalem, which made it necessary for them to take their turns in attending there. Here was one, who like Zechariah, having fulfilled his course, returned to his abode in some of the cities appropriated to the tribe of Levi. But you say, "If he were journeying on this errand, what could have presented greater claims to his compassionate attention, than a fellowcreature, a fellow-countryman, a fellow-worshipper, who on returning from his adorations at the temple, had fallen among thieves?" How naturally might the priest have said, "Soon may this be my own lot!" But, instead of being attracted by this scene, he "passed by, on the other side," as if he was too delicate and sensitive to bear such a sight. "The priest was taken from among men, that he might have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, seeing that he himself is encompassed with infirmities." Had not this priest learned, in the temple, lessons of mercy, when he saw the lamb substituted for the guilty, and pouring out its life for a sin-offering, to set forth the Lamb of God, "who pitied us in our low estate, because his mercy endureth for ever," and who, "loving us, gave himself a ransom for us?" But, our Lord, perhaps, designed to teach us, that if our ministry does not improve us, and cherish the tender, hearty benevolence, which so well becomes our office, it hardens us into stones; just as female modesty, when it is lost, is succeeded by the "whore's forehead that cannot blush." If our Lord had not this design, why did he say, "a priest," passed by the wounded man? would not a merchant, or a soldier, have served as well the purpose of the preacher? And does not history confirm this implied censure on the priest? Have not men of this order been the inquisitors of the great red dragon, the familiars of the harlot, that is drunk with the blood of the saints? Have not those who ought to have been the ministers of mercy, stood by the stake, and feasted their eyes with the sight of fellow-men burning alive for the truth? For to enter on the ministry of God's church, without a heart touched by divine charity, and without the yearnings of compassion for the souls of men, is to take the first step in a guilty course of selfishness, which ends in all reckless wickedness, and obduracy of soul. "As troops of robbers wait for a man," said the prophet Hosea, "so the company of the priests murder in the way by consent."*

2. Of the Levite, we are next informed, that "he came and looked, and passed by on the other side."

Though it is frequently supposed that all the tribe of Levi were priests, our Lord corrects this error. Only one Levitical family, that of Aaron, was dedicated to the priesthood; though all the rest were set apart to the service of God, and were bound to assist the priests in their ministry. This tribe had not its own share of the Holy Land; but, instead of it, received the tithes of the other estates, and cities among the rest of the tribes. Through these, therefore, they had to travel, at intervals, to go up to Jerusalem, and in one of these journeys, this Levite is supposed to have met with the wounded Jew. It is difficult to say, whether the Levite is exhibited in a better, or a worse light, than the priest; but we seem compelled to give him a little more credit for so much humanity, as not to disdain even to stop a moment to notice a distressed fellow-creature. Yet what did this avail, when, after looking (and "his eye should have affected his heart,") he also passed by on the other side? He satisfied himself, perhaps, with barren pity, saying, "Ah, poor man, I am sorry for you." But what does it avail, "if a brother, or sister, be naked, or destitute of daily food, to say, Be warmed, or be ye filled?" Was this all that was to be expected from a man who was set apart to explain God's statutes to Israel, and to teach Jacob the law, whose essence is love? "Let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth."

But I am asked, why I declaim against ministers as hard hearted and wicked? Is not this an impious attempt to

bring the church into disgrace? Should we not imitate the pious sons of Noah, and hide the shame of our spiritual fathers? But I ask, in my turn, whose words am I expounding? Are they my own? Did I create the parable that exposes the hard hearted priest and Levite to everlasting shame? Are not these "the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose zeal for his Father's house, the Church of God, ate him up?" Has he not here taught us, that to pass by such conduct in God's ministers with silence, that might seem to imply consent, is to betray the interests of religion; and that to brand their frigid selfishness with infamy, is to vindicate the honour of God, and anticipate the enemy, who would pour heavier censures on religion itself, if we did not lay the blame where it is due? Can the sins of ministers be concealed? Do they not proclaim their own shame? Other men have eyes and ears, if ministers have not hearts. And to save the church from such scandals to their calling, we must make them know that they in vain attempt to hide their sins under the cloak of office. Well did Richard Baxter say, in his Reformed Pastor, "I am asked why I did not write this remonstrance in Latin. I answer, if ministers had sinned in Latin, I would have reproved them in Latin. But if they will sin in English, they must hear of it in English."

This hard hearted selfishness was the sin of the Jewish priesthood, at this time; and our Saviour deemed it mercy, rather than severity, to hold them up to shame. Well he knew how much they needed to be warned of a temper that would end in that finished act of cruelty, the crucifying of the Lord of glory. "The multitude that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned;" but priests and Levites mocked and reviled, saying, "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it again in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross." Yet these men made their boast of the law, which said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and thus by breaking the law, dishonoured God, who is the Father of mercies, and God of all compassion. Think not that this

priest, or his brother Levite, were without excuse. No, selfishness will always find reasons to satisfy itself. "I cannot bear the sight of wounds," says the delicate priest; "it affects my nerves, and makes me unwell. Besides, what good can I do by looking? I cannot heal him; for I am no surgeon." Both of these cold hearted spectators may have said, "It is dangerous to stop; for perhaps the robbers may be still lurking near, and may plunge us into the same wretched condition. And we have nothing to give, for what we have we need for our journey; and if we could give him any thing, it would do him no good, for we cannot take him with us, but must leave him on the road." Thus they approved themselves. But neither heaven nor earth will admit their excuse; for these two merciless men are but the dark shades to set off the principal beauty of the picture which our Lord here exhibits. See, then,

II. A bright example, to teach us the self-denying benevolence that is exhibited to our imitation.

Amidst all the rude scenes that render this earth a dreary wilderness, none are so afflictive, to a rightly disposed mind, as those exhibitions of cruelty which our fallen nature often displays, harrowing up the compassionate mind with anguish, more acute, and more difficult to endure, than any grief of Who has read the tales of horror in which African slavery has been so fruitful, and not recalled the words of the wise man, "I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and beheld the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter." We should not, however, forget, but rather eagerly embrace, the consolation which God has given us to counterbalance our affliction: there are signs that grace has visited this earthsights which heaven may look down upon with delight, where mercy reigns over misery, and benevolence riots in the luxury of doing good: with these refreshing spots let us sooth the eyes that have been pained with tragedies of guilt and woe. If our race is degraded in our eyes by acts of cruelty, and we are in danger of that misanthropic disgust which is too near an approach to the vice which creates it, we should look

for medicine to the wounded and diseased mind, in those victories of benevolence which will enable us to say, exulting, "Thank God, there is something that man does of which we need not be ashamed." We have here to refresh and regale ourselves with the triumphs of principle over prejudice, of benevolence over selfishness, and of truth over sophistry.

1. The triumph of principle over prejudice.

This pattern of benevolence was a Samaritan, whose nation was filled with prejudice against the Jews, who had given them but too much occasion. The woman of Samaria, therefore, instead of complying instantly with our Saviour's request to give him drink from Jacob's well, at Sychar, hesitated and asked, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?" And when Jesus sent his disciples to a Samaritan village, to prepare him lodgings, the inhabitants "would not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem," to worship at the temple, which was a rival to theirs. Even the mild and loving John was provoked to ask, "Wilt thou that we command fire from heaven to consume them, as did Elijah?" But this Samaritan, as soon as he saw one who had come down from Jerusalem, had compassion on him. Prejudice would have said, "This is an enemy to our nation;" but Principle replied, "If men are enemies to us, we must not be so to them. Though he is a Jew, yet is he not a fellow creature, and in distress?" Prejudice may have said, "The law, only commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and therefore we may hate our enemy; but Principle answered, "No, the law of God enjoins us to show kindness to the stranger, saying, 'ye know the heart of a stranger, for ye were strangers in a foreign land; and though he were mine enemy, and personally hated me, yet does not the law expressly say, 'If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him?'* How much more then should I relieve a man! How much better is a man than an ox, or an ass! What though the prejudices that haunt my mind revolt and plead for cruelty, should I not rather listen

^{*} Ex. xxiii. 4, 5. Prov. xxv. 21.

to the yearnings of compassion that arise in my heart, and cry for mercy on this poor dying man? Is not the mercy that God has planted in the human breast, a safer guide than the prejudices with which men have filled my mind? Has he not said, 'If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it?' Prov. xxiv. 11. 'He that stoppeth his ear from the cry of the poor, he shall cry, and his prayer shall not be heard.' If I visit the sins of this Jew upon him, in the hour of need, should God mark my iniquities, how should I stand? Has not God said, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord shall remember him in the time of trouble?'"

Such should be the triumphs of Christian principle, over the prejudices that we have imbibed against men of another colour, another clime, another creed. What though we are charged to do especial good to those who are of the household of faith, and who look to us for aid; are we not also commanded, "as far as we have opportunity, to do good to all men?" "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." If we wish to win an enemy, it must be by kindness; for evil is to be overcome only by good, which melts even the hostile mind, as the fire heaped on the head of the crucible liquifies the metal. If religious prejudices harden our hearts, we have reason to fear that our prejudice is in favour of error; for truth dwells with love; and if it is the love of truth that sets us in opposition to another man's creed, it will fill us with benevolence and compassion for him, who, by embracing falsehood, is his own enemy rather than ours. The chief evil that error occasions, is the quenching of that love that should reign among brethren; and if we harden our hearts against men, because they are enemies to our creed, we take the most effectual method to make and keep them so. When misery pleads for mercy, truth will join with charity in saying, "it must not plead in vain." Behold,

2. The triumph of benevolence over selfishness.

Self is sluggish as the sloth, and pleads for our own ease; but benevolence rouses to labour and toil in behalf of others, and makes us unable to rest in our beds, while another needs our aid. The good Samaritan, therefore, alighted and came to the dying Jew, and bound up his wounds, which was not so soon or so easily done as it is now said. To bind up wounds, is not a task for the delicate and self indulgent. But where is the worth of barren pity, which will take no trouble to do good? whatever soothing words it may utter, it is but selfishness. That alone proves itself love to God and love to man, which will take some pains, or endure some toil, to relieve misery, and do that for our fellow creature, which he cannot do for himself. They who labour for the instruction of the poor, prove their compassion for the ignorant; those who visit and relieve the sick, show their sympathy with the sufferer; and they who go to call the heathen at the ends of the earth, show mercy towards "the ignorant, and them that are out of the way" of truth.

The Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the afflicted Jew, according to the method of healing in those times. The comforts provided for his own refreshment on the road, were expended upon another's healing. For he did not say, "How can I spare these things? I shall want them myself." That is benevolence which denies itself something, to relieve the greater wants of another; and without some such sacrifice, how dwells the love of God in us? It is thus that the poor, who seem shut out from the privilege of benevolence, often give the best proof of enjoying it. For they make the real sacrifice, and how seldom can the rich be said to do the same! They must go very far in distributing of their abundance, before they know what it is to suffer any privation or embarrassment, on account of another's woes.

The same victory of benevolence is seen when the Samaritan sets the wounded man on his own beast, and walks by his side till he comes to the inn. Yet, whatever privation the benefactor may have endured for want of the oil and wine which he had expended in an attempt to heal the

wounds of the Jew, he would find the luxury of doing good more delicious than any other refreshment; and whatever fatigue he may have felt in walking, the heaven would shine over his head with its brightest crystal, the air would refresh him with its most balmy breezes, earth would spread her softest carpet of flowers beneath his feet, and all creation conspire to gladden the heart that had pity on an injured and dying foe. Say not this is poetry. It is sober truth. No man can do acts of kindness like these, without enjoying the approving testimony of God and of conscience, which is "the soul's sweet sun-shine, and the heartfelt joy."

But he that is charitable, indeed, will not do good by halves; and this Samaritan was not content to say, when arrived at the inn, "Now I have done my duty; let others take care of him." Far from this, he charged the host to take care of the Jew, and, furnishing the money* that his entertainment would cost, promised, if more were expended, when he returned, to repay it. Here we have a lesson of great value. For many can be kind at the moment that the object is under their eye, and creates an excitement of the passions, who never think about it afterwards; and when removed from the scene, have no concern to relieve misery which they do not see. Such is the charity of those who merely give to an importunate beggar in the streets. But this, this is the true triumph of benevolence; that which bears the miserable in memory, which seeks out its objects, which makes itself responsible, to some amount, for the care of the poor, in days to come.

And now, who is contented with admiring this Samaritan? Who would not envy him? Who does not recall the words of our Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive?" For how delicious must have been the sensations of this benefactor, as he went on his journey the next morning! Could any thing but tears of joy have given vent to the satisfaction, the gratitude of his soul, in having enjoyed the privilege of relieving so much misery, and doing so much

^{*} Two pence or denarii, amounting to 1s. 3d. sterling.

good? What can elevate us so far towards the bliss and the glory of him that remembered us in our low estate, that binds up the broken in heart, and heals their wounds? What application of our money for selfish indulgence could yield half the pleasure that this sacrifice of self to benevolence must have conferred?

Here we behold, also,

3. The triumph of truth over sophistry.

Our Lord having wrought up the Jews to admiration, even of a Samaritan, by telling how kindly he treated a Jew, safely appealed to their own judgment; "Which, now, of these three thinkest thou was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?" They pretended to be willing to obey the law that commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves, but to be unable to determine who is our neighbour. To conquer the selfish casuistry of a disputatious mind, there is nothing like an appeal to facts, and to the affections of the heart. Some of the audience, therefore, were compelled to answer, "He that showed mercy on him." So, then, a Samaritan made himself, by mercy, a neighbour to a Jew; and this teaches us that, by benevolence, we make ourselves neighbours to those who would have been deemed enemies. "Go, then," says Christ, "and do thou likewise." So feel, and so act, as this good Samaritan, that wherever you see misery, you may feel that it is yours to relieve it; wherever you find want, it is yours to supply it from what God has intrusted to you; and though it were your greatest enemy, it is your triumph and your bliss to make him your friend, by making yourself his.

But in what connexion does this divine injunction stand? As an exposition of the law of God. For Christ had been asked, "What good thing should I do to inherit eternal life?" and Jesus answered, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The answer was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy strength, and all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." But when Christ replied, "Thou hast answered well,

this do, and thou shalt live;" he, willing to justify himself, asked, "But who is my neighbour?" A parable elicited from him the confession, that the man who is deemed our greatest enemy, was that very neighbour whom we are bound to love as ourselves; that the neighbour to this Jew was the Samaritan, who showed mercy to him. Well might the Psalmist say, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." Far from confining that phrase, "thy neighbour," to those who merely live near, or are associated by ties of kindred or similarity of creed, we should consider him who is most opposed to us, and from whom we were removed by national prejudice, or religious differences, as the man whom the law commands us to love as ourselves.

Then "tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" Hear it expounded by that "one law-giver who is able to save or destroy?" Well might he who was willing to justify himself seek to avoid the force of the law, and pretend ignorance of its extent. For who that admits the whole compass of the legislator's claims, can pretend to have fulfilled what he demands? Who that reflects how the bitterest enemy is, by the law, endued with a claim upon such kindness as this Samaritan showed to a Jew, can refrain from exclaiming, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!" "Oh, to win Christ, and be found in him, not having on my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith."

What man in his senses, after hearing this exposition of the law, can suppose that Christ, in sending this inquirer to the law, designed seriously to teach him to trust to his own obedience to it for eternal life? Who can be so blind as not to see that he was but answering the fool according to his folly that asked, "What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" "lest he should be wise in his own conceit, or righteous in his own eyes?" And when he saw the extent of the law, so as to be obliged to confess it with his own lips; must he not, if sincere, have said, "then, Lord, if

this is what the law demands, how can I pretend to claim eternal life by works of law? Is there no other way of obtaining life? For, if there is not, who can be saved?"

But, happily for us, he who thus expounded the law, so as to shut us out of all hope of being justified by our obedience to it, is also the preacher and substance of the Gospel. And who that knows him does not see that he has here given us his own portrait drawn to the life? For, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. "He remembered us in our low estate." The allegorical interpretation of this parable we have already exploded, and it is plain that it will not hold. For though some represent the wounded man as designed to represent the lost sinner, and the priest and Levite, the law; does it not strike every intelligent man, that these unfeeling persons are exhibited to our just condemnation for not relieving the miserable when it was in their power? but it is not in the power of the law to relieve us. For "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." It is a very awkward interpretation that says, the Samaritan who relieved the Jew, represents Christ, when we know that salvation is of the Jews, since he who saves us Gentiles was himself a Jew. But dismissing this foolish way of twisting parables from their manifest design, and destroying their proper effect, by imposing upon them a meaning taken from our vagrant imagination, we may still say, that all, and more than all, that is ascribed to the benevolent Samaritan, Christ himself has done for us. He surpasses the description of the Prophet Ezekiel,—"When I saw thee in thy sins and in thy blood, my time was a time of love; and I said to thee, live." For was it not he who, when we were fallen into ruin, were stripped of our glory and our strength, and were bleeding out our life, and were drawing near to eternal death, supplied the balm of life, his own atoning blood, and covered us with his own righteousness? He supplies our wants, takes us under his own care, and all that is requisite to give us life and health and bliss, he affords for time and eternity. "He

bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, might live to righteousness; for by his stripes we are healed." If, then, you ask, "What good thing you must do to inherit eternal life," we answer, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" But if, instructed by this exposition of that law, you answer, "There is not a just man that liveth and sinneth not against the law.' If we must have kept this law wholly, and not offend in one point, as the only terms of life which the law prescribes, then it is all over with us, and we must sink down into despair, for there is nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries. Is there no way of escape? No hope for him that has broken the law?" We answer, "Yes; there is one who has pitied us in our lost state, and brought salvation for us. Behold your compassionate deliverer. Hear him say, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved.' He has become a neighbour and a brother to us, by showing mercy to us; there is 'redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' For he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.'"

But if we profess to have obtained mercy, we must remember that, as surely as he is a Saviour, he is a King. "Why call ye me master and Lord," he asks, "and do not those things that I say? I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." It is not only as true, but as much a part of the Gospel, that we should imitate him, as that we should believe on him. Go and do thou likewise: "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you."

After such an example as Christ has set us by the kindness he has shown to ourselves, what imitation should a Christian exhibit? Can he walk through this world of woe, where the victims of misery lie bleeding on every hand, and look askance, as if afraid to shock his delicate nerves with the sight of wounds and the sound of dying groans? Must we not brace up our souls to the firmness of active benevolence, and repudiate the sickly sensibility that is so tender of its own feelings as to have no tenderness for others?

Where should the children of mercy be found but where there is misery to be relieved? Must we not distribute of our oil and our wine to those who need them for life, where we want them but for enjoyment? Can we know a Christian's relish of his food, if we never part with any portion of ours to feed the hungry? And how shall the curse be taken off our money, or money cease to be filthy lucre, and be made clean to us, but by giving alms of such things as we have? For to spend all upon ourselves is to have a blessing upon none. Can our time, or our toil, be those of a Christian, if we spend no portion of either upon "works of faith and labours of love," in the only world in which we expect to enjoy the luxury of charity? Is not the charge, to imitate the compassionate Samaritan, designed as a privilege, that we may know the bliss of benevolence? For are we not bound to expound by our conduct that law which is written by his Spirit on our hearts? And is not this all pure love for us, that we may know what "peace have they who love his law?" Could he have loved us as he has done, and not destined us to the highest felicity, that of a benefactor? Is there any virtue, or any praise, or any bliss, that he has not designed to bestow upon us? And is it not essential to the full evidence of your admiration for your Saviour, and your interest in him, that you should do as he has taught you by this beauteous parable, and by his own more beauteous example? Go, go, then, and do like this Samaritan; love your bitterest foe; give not affected pity, but active, generous aid, to all the misery you find. Double your enjoyments by sharing them with others; and, by making the widow's heart sing for joy, tune your own to the sweetest response.

Were I to ask the Christian, what is the most glorious sight presented by the whole universe of beings, through eternal ages; he would say that which was presented to the eye of admiring heaven, when the Son of God beheld fallen man plunged into the ruin of sin, and pitying him, descended, to bring relief, at the price of his own blood. On this, the discerning and the benevolent mind reposes as the brightest spot in the moral world, which affords instruction of infinite

value, and gives a holy and happy stimulus to all the intelligent creation. For "now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, is made known by the church the manifold wisdom and grace of God." Who, then, comes so near to this most exalted pattern, as the Christian, when, touched with the Saviour's compassion, he pities the miseries of fallen man, stoops to pour the balm of consolation into the bleeding spirit, expending his own resources to relieve another's wants? Nor does this require the possession of wealth; for God has kindly put the pleasures of benevolence and the honours of usefulness, within the reach of all. They are often enjoyed by the poor, who bestow their time, which is their bread, on the sick and dying; and especially by the Christian poor, who exercise the truest charity on the most wretched of mankind, by leading the ignorant and depraved to the knowledge of Christ, who makes us "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him."

LECTURE XXI.

SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, AND LAWYERS DENOUNCED.

Mark xx. 45—47. Luke xi. 37—54. xx. 45—47.

CHRIST dining with a Pharisee! What, then, are the Pharisees also become his disciples? No; his discourse, at the table, precludes this hope. But "if those who believe not invite you to a feast, and you be disposed to go," the Apostle intimates that you are at liberty. For though the intercourse of the pious with the men of the world, is an affair of great delicacy and difficulty, it is also an important means of mercy to mankind; and, by this, you may be "the salt of the earth." We are, therefore, taught, by example and precept, not to shun all friendly intercourse with unbelievers, but to make some sacrifice of our own feelings to their salvation. Such society is, indeed, fraught with danger, to which we should be exquisitely alive; but benevolence to men and fidelity to the truth, will be the best security for our own souls, since those who are intent on doing good, may look to God to preserve them from receiving harm. We shall, if blessed to the conversion of unbelievers, find ourselves among new friends, and if they reject our testimony, we shall not be likely to be invited to the dangerous society again. The fidelity of our Lord, on this occasion, shows that he was not carried away by the company of worldly men, to forget the errand on which he came into the world. Two distinct classes of persons are here denounced.

I. The Pharisees, Luke xi. 39-44.

The occasion was given, as in another instance, by Christ

not conforming to the practice of the Pharisees, who were accustomed to wash, or, as the original expresses it, to baptise, before meals; for this not being enjoined by the law of God, though it was supposed by the Jews to constitute a great part of religion, our Redeemer, who always protested against teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, refused to conform to the rite. The Pharisee marvelled; but the discourse to which this gave rise, shows how well a kind intercourse with religious opponents, and fidelity to our own principles, may be combined; and how they may open to us a door of usefulness, which morose reserve, or unprincipled compliance, would have closed. Our Divine Teacher now denounces the Pharisees,

1. For combining superstitious ablutions with foul crimes, v.39.

The same censure is hurled at the same offenders, Matt. xxiii. 25, 26. The Saviour, said, indeed, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, that they bid you observe, that observe and do." As Moses sat and delivered to Israel the statutes and ordinances of the ceremonial law, so the Scribes and Pharisees, in his stead, gave out the ordinances of the Jewish worship, and, as far as they did this, they sat in Moses' seat; otherwise, in vain would they have pretended to sit in the very chair, as the Pope foolishly boasts of sitting in that of Peter. The Jewish feasts were fixed to certain times, according to the appearance of the new moon; and there were other circumstances, as well as that of time, that required to be settled by authority, which was, at that period, in the hands of the Scribes and Pharisees. Our Lord, therefore, enjoins obedience to them, as far as they carried the law of Moses into effect; for Christ came, not to destroy, but to honour and fulfil the law. He opposed nothing but human traditions, which served only to undermine the law.

"Ye make clean the outside of the cup and the plate," that is, you merely wash the body, which is but the outside of the man. Those who know not true religion, will often take immense pains to practise bodily worship, as the price of

exemption from the religion of the heart. The priests of Baal cut themselves with knives, till the blood gushed out; the Hindoos torture themselves in a way too shocking to describe; the votaries of Rome inflict on themselves flagellation, fastings, and celibacy; but all this cannot reach the heart. "Your inward part," says Christ, "is full of ravenning and wickedness." The covetousness of the Pharisees led them to devour widows' houses; availing themselves of the defenceless condition and confiding temper of widowed females, to rob them, under high pretence of sanctity, supported by making long prayers, for which, however, they would receive more tremendous condemnation. An ancient justly said, "Feigned sanctity is double iniquity."

They were also "full of malice;" for this I take to be the meaning of wickedness, as distinguished from rapacity or covetousness. The whole conduct of the Pharisees towards our Lord was marked with malice, and this is the essence of wickedness. It constitutes the difference between manslaughter and murder; for though in both cases the life of a fellow creature is taken away, in the former it is by accident, in the latter by malice or premeditation. But what infatuation! To think that washing the body can sanctify such crimes as rapacity and malice! Justly did our Lord exclaim, "Ye fools!" or rather, "Ye thoughtless creatures! Did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also?" If he who formed our bodies would have us preserve this, his work, pure; must not the Father of our spirits be concerned to see them partakers of his holiness? Instead of plundering the widow, and indulging in malice, "give alms of such things as ye have;" deal your bread to the hungry, and that will sanctify your food more effectually than washing the hands before meals. Gratitude to the giver, a benevolent promptitude to share our meal with the indigent, is cleanness of heart, which he who stamped his image on it at creation, values more than the external purity that a little water can produce. In this doctrine, our Lord did but echo that which came from the chair of Moses .-Deut. xxvi. 13-15.

Another woe is pronounced,

2. For combining the scrupulous payment of tithes with the neglect of the graces of the heart, v. 42, and Matt. xxiii. 23.

Tithes, as God instituted them, were a just and reasonable provision for those who gave themselves up to the service of the public. The Pharisees, intent on magnifying their own righteousness, affected the most scrupulous payment, even to that of garden herbs, such as mint, rue, anise, and cummin.* This again they made a substitute for judgment and the love of God, or as in Matthew we read, "judgment, mercy, and faith." Blind guides were they, who did not perceive that these were the weightier matters of the law. Judgment was that equity towards men which the moral governor of the world often inculcated, saying, "Do judgment and justice." But the Pharisees, who devoured widows' houses, set justice at defiance; and though they sat in Moses' chair, they often refused to give judgment in favour of the oppressed poor. The love of God was the weightiest matter of the law, the first and great command. But our Lord said, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you;" though Moses, in that law which they professed so scrupulously to observe, had said, "Take good heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God." Mercy also is enjoined in the law, as more weighty than sacrifice; but Christ had already said, "Go and learn what that meaneth; I wish to have mercy exercised rather than sacrifices offered."

In the dark ages, men committed the most atrocious crimes, and then fancied, that by donations to what was called the church, leaving estates to pay for saying masses for the repose of their souls, they should obtain heaven at last. What insanity! To suppose that payment to the servants can expiate insults to the master! Such is the glory of God, that love to him is the spring of every other grace; and such his rectitude, that he shows himself loved by those only, who for his sake faithfully discharge their duty towards their fellow servants. "These things, therefore, ye should have

^{*} Cummin is supposed to be the oriental fennel.

done;" for love to God, and justice to man, must constitute the essence of religion, under every dispensation. The performance of one duty cannot justify the neglect of another; though some are the weightier matters of the law, and deserve our first regard. Moral precepts are superior to the ceremonial. These were given for the sake of those; and it is only by attention to the graces of the heart, judgment, mercy, fidelity, and the love of God, that we can perform the ritual of religion in a way acceptable to God, and profitable to ourselves.

3. The Pharisees are denounced for making religion an instrument of pride and ambition: v. 23, and Matt. xxiii. 5, 6.

In civil life, we are commanded to give honour to whom honour is due, and especially to honour the king, who sits in the place of supreme authority; but, in the church, we are all on a level, and should forget our differences. To seek the uppermost seats, under pretence of superior sanctity, as the Pharisees did, is to prove ourselves below those who humbly take a lower place. A visit to a modern synagogue, will convince us, that the spirit here condemned, still reigns there. The salutations in the market place, next mentioned, were not those of civility, which religion enjoins, saying, "be courteous;" but such as the Pharisees claimed for their superior piety. In the same spirit, they loved to be called Rabbi, and to be honoured as a sort of infallible teachers. How contrary to religion! This divine principle lays us in the dust, overwhelmed with the glory of God, conscious of our own impurity and unworthiness in his sight, accounting ourselves not better than others, but, before our conversion, "the chief of sinners," and after it, "less than the least of all saints." The holiest man is the humblest, and shuns, rather than courts, admiration and honour.

In the same ambitious spirit, the Pharisees "made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the hem of their garments." The Greek word phylactery, which we have adopted, signifies a guard, preservative, or amulet; for the superstitious Jews ascribed to these things a mystical power to avert evils; though some have said they merely supposed that the phylactery would help them to guard, or keep in memory the commandments of God. The Jews derive phylacteries from two passages in the law: Exodus xiii. 16, "And it shall be for a token upon thy hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes;" and Deut. vi. 8, 9, "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hands, and they shall be as frontlets between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." It is a question among Christian expositors, whether it were not a mere figurative way of expressing the constancy with which they should have the commandments of God before their minds. Some, however, affirm, that this is as literal a command as any one of those which prescribed the rites and sacrifices of the law. A glance at the connexion of the texts quoted, will show that the literal interpretation is attended with great difficulties; for who can say what these words are that must be written on the phylactery! The whole law could not be thus worn on the person, or inscribed on the house; and, therefore, a selection has been made, chiefly derived from these words preceding the command in Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy might." But this will not apply to the command in Exodus, which refers to the whole law concerning the passover. It is observable, however, that our Redeemer merely censures the making broad the phylacteries, and does not condemn the use of them, as we might suppose he would have done, if they had been mere superstitions, derived from an erroneous interpretation. While we dispute whether they were enjoined or not, we cannot severely blame the Jews for their practice. They write sentences of the law on parchments, and twist them around their fingers and wrists and foreheads, and the richer persons, it is said, place such inscribed rolls on their door posts. The word phylactery being Greek, they employ tephillim, a term of Hebrew origin, signifying prayers, or prayer dresses, as they are put on at the time of prayer.

The other censure pronounced on the Pharisees for enlarging the borders of their garments, has been, by some

interpreters, considered identical with the preceding; but I conceive that, instead of mentioning the same thing in two different forms of expression, our Lord now refers to what all agree was a divine command, which we find in Deut. xxii. 12, "Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself." This is more largely enjoined in Numbers xv. 38, which was, probably, the original command, "Speak to the children of Level and hid them that they make them fringes on the Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes on the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue; and it shall be to you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart, and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring." This peculiarity of dress Jehovah evidently enjoined, to remind the Jews that they were a peculiar people to himself, and to recall to their consciences their obligation to keep his laws. Instead, however, of literally preserving such a fashion in their ordinary dress, they have adopted a vest, with a fringe and blue ribband, which they put on at prayer time, and which the more strict wear continually under their ordinary clothes. The Pharisees, in our Lord's time, made this fringe and ribband large and conspicuous, as their phylacteries also were made broad, for, in every thing, hypocrites are ambitious of superiority. It is supposed that Christ were the fringe and ribband on the border of his robe, and that this was the hem of the garment which persons who were in quest of a cure sought to touch. We do not, however, read that he "enlarged" the borders of his garments. Ostentation in religion, is the badge of hypocrisy; overdoing is undoing; for the actor will always overstep the modesty of nature, while the man who duly regards the eye of God, will shun, rather than attract, that of man.

Finally. For concealed mischief the Pharisees are con-

demned, Luke xi. 47.

The Jewish law made the touch of a dead body, pollution. Thus God taught his people, that "death is the wages of

sin." As a corpse, or a human bone, would so defile a man as to exclude him from the congregation, it was a duty to make the graves conspicuous, that none might violate the law, by coming into the assembly, after contact with the dead, without the appointed purification. But the Scribes and Pharisees were denounced by Christ, as mere sepulchres of corruption; for of the wicked, it is said, "Their throat is an open sepulchre," polluting, morally; as the dead body, ceremonially. The sanctimonious pretences of these men concealed their real character from ordinary penetration, and defiled the mind by false notions of religion, as the body would have been polluted by walking over a concealed grave.

The religion of the Pharisees was the popery of Judaism, as popery is the pharisaism of Christianity. By popery, I mean, not merely what is ordinarily known by that name, but whatever partakes of the same spirit, which is that of human depravity operating upon divine institutions. When first a revelation from heaven is introduced, and its disciples are few and weak, it is opposed by worldly men, who, when it has struggled into strength and influence, will adopt it, but to pervert it into an instrument of pride and domination.

The Pharisees, therefore, are condemned for "compassing sea and land, to make one proselyte; and when he is made, he is rendered two-fol dmore the child of hell than themselves." After Pompey had reduced the Jews to mere subjects of the Roman state, it is known that they began to spread over the whole of that wide dominion; some travelling, it seems, on purpose to gain proselytes, who began to multiply, when the time drew near for Christ to set up the kingdom of heaven. As the votaries of Rome sought to repair the wastes which the Reformation created in their communion, by missions to the heathen; it has been said, that the Pharisees, seeing their credit shaken at home, by the preaching of Christ, spread themselves in foreign countries, not so much to convert the Gentiles to the God of Israel, as to make those already converted, proselytes to the Pharisaic sect.

But nothing is more common, than to see renegadoes the worst of sectaries, and the fiercest of persecutors. For when men change their religion, as it is called, and show that they had previously no religion to change, and had, after the change, no more religion than before, such conversions are almost invariably transitions from bad to worse. The proselytes of the Pharisees, therefore, surpassed their masters in superstition, hypocrisy, immorality, and persecuting malice. Many of them brought the vices of heathenism into the profession of Judaism; and having once prided themselves on their adoption of the true religion, they could not bear to be told that they still needed to be converted, and become as little children, and to have a righteousness far better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

The censure pronounced on the Pharisaic doctrine concerning oaths, we have noticed in a former Lecture.* Christ calls these doctors, blind guides. Multitudes who are in the darkness of nature and of sin, have undertaken to be guides of the soul, exposing themselves to the expostulation of the Apostle, "thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" The blindness of these teachers, appeared in their asserting, that an oath by the temple, or the altar, was not so binding, as one by the gold offered in the temple, or by the sacrifice laid on the altar. Here may be easily seen a wish to attach superior value to the votive offerings and the sacrifices, by which the priests, who were mostly of the Pharisaic sect, profited. Christ, therefore, indignantly exclaimed, "Ye fools and blind, is it not the sanctity of the temple and the altar, that makes holy the gifts and the sacrifices? Whoever, therefore, swears by the temple or the altar, swears by the gift on the altar, and the God that dwelleth in the temple."

When our Lord had thus poured the full tide of condemnation on the Scribes and Pharisees, a lawyer, who evidently partook of their spirit, said, "Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also;" which directs our attention to

^{*} Lecture on the Sermon on the Mount.

II. The Lawyers.

The law of Moses was the civil, as well as ecclesiastical code of the Jews, so that lawyers were, among them, expositors of Scripture. Our Lord does not deny that they were included in his censures, but openly charges them with cruelly burdening the people, building the sepulchres of martyrs, while actuated by the same spirit that slew them, and taking away the key of knowledge, so as to shut the kingdom of heaven against men.

1. Cruelly burdening men with the law: Luke xi. 46.

The lawyers are charged with not touching the burden they laid on others, and yet we know they were superstitious observers of the ceremonies. I conceive, therefore, that the moral, rather than the ceremonial law, was the burden to which our Lord refers. The law of the ten commandments, as a covenant of works, was taught by the lawyers, as the way of life. The law which was given to our first parents in innocence, that by obedience to it they might obtain righteousness and a title to endless life, was re-published on Sinai: not, however, as a covenant of works, but as a rule of life, and a means of impressing Israel with a sense of their need of salvation by Christ, who was set forth in the sacrifices of the ceremonial law. But the Pharisaic lawyers, by teaching the people that they must keep it for justification, rendered it a burden grievous to be borne. For "whosoever is of the works of the law is under the curse."

They who bind this law on men as a covenant of works, do not themselves keep it. The lawyers did "not touch it wit one of their fingers;" they did not understand it; they made it a mere external affair, though it is spiritual and reaches the heart; they fancied they kept it, when they should have said, "I have seen an end of all perfection, for thy commandment is exceeding broad." Paul, who had "lived after the strictest sect of the Pharisees;" and "was alive without the law once," fancying himself entitled to life for keeping it perfectly, no sooner came to understand it, than he found he had not touched it with one of his fingers; for "when the command came," he says, "sin revived and I died, and that

which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." This humbling conviction was produced by one command, which shows the genius of the whole: "I had not known sin, except the law had said, Thou shall not covet." That which condemns a covetous wish must be, not a rule for mere external conduct, but a regulator of the heart. Ignorant of this, the Jewish lawyers undertook to expound what they did not understand; and bound men to keep, in order to obtain eternal life, what they observed not themselves according to its true import. Ah, how many such expositors of the law have we still! They bind men down to that which is impossible, to obtain justification by keeping the law. But they touch it not themselves, with one of their fingers. The consciousness of their own imperfection, if they were sincere, would lead them to correct their error. But being carnal, blind, and in love with darkness, they persist in enforcing obedience to God's law for justification, neither thinking, nor caring, that they do not keep it themselves; for such teachers often live immoral lives. The woe which Christ denounced on these men they despised, because he appeared in the lowly form of one who came not to judge the world; and still men, who would be afraid to practise law or medicine, while ignorant of these sciences, lest they should be punished by a court of justice, ruin souls by their empiricism, because no judgment immediately follows; but they go on deceiving and being deceived, till Christ come to execute the judgment here pronounced.

2. They built the sepulchres of the prophets while inheriting the spirit that slew them: v. 47—51.

That the Jews "killed their own prophets, as well as the Lord Jesus," the Apostle Paul observes. There is an ancient tradition, that Isaiah was sawn asunder by order of one of their kings; and it is said that Jeremiah was stoned to death by his wicked countrymen, in Egypt. Thus was Urijah, a prophet treated by Jehoiakim.—Jer. xxvi. 21—23.

But, for those whom the fathers had killed, the sons, affecting great piety, erected splendid sepulchres. Had this been in consequence of disapproving their fathers' conduct,

it would not have been blameable; but unhappily, they showed, by imitating, that they approved of their ancestors' crimes, and made themselves heirs of their guilt. We read our Lord's words thus, "Ye bear witness that ye approve the deeds of your fathers." But the original is, "Ye bear witness, and (και) ye approve, or consent to, the deeds of your fathers. By building up the tombs of the murdered prophets, ye give a public testimony that ye are descended from murderers of prophets; but, alas! ye agree with them in spirit, and sanction their crimes by your imitation." For the wisdom of God, that is, his Son, has declared, "I will send them prophets and apostles, endued with the same authority and inspiration as those of old; and ye will prove yourselves the genuine sons of the murderers of prophets, by persecuting and killing the inspired messengers of the new dispensation as your fathers did those of the old."

What will be the consequence? The blood of the former prophets is not yet avenged; for the vengeance is reserved for those who shall kill the last. As the souls of the martyrs, who cried, "How long, O Lord, dost thou not avenge our blood?" were told to "wait till their brethren that should be killed as they were should be fulfilled." The last drop makes the full cup overflow. "On this generation that shall slay the Apostles will come all the vengeance due to the righteous blood shed from the death of Abel, the first martyr, to that of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the temple." This difficult passage has given rise to three different opinions. The first and most natural position refers us to 2 Chron. xxiv. 20-22. "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said,

The Lord look upon it, and requite it." But this Zechariah is called the son of Jehoiada; and in the parallel passage of Matthew (xxiii. 35) the person Christ mentions is called the son of Barachias. But the Scriptures apply the words father and son to ancestors and descendants generally, and thus one person is said to be the son of another, who was his grandfather, or even a more remote ancestor. But another interpretation of this passage applies it to Zechariah, one of the minor prophets, who calls himself the son of Barachiah.* We do not, however, read that he was killed by the Jews, though some (induced perhaps by this text) assert that he was. The third opinion is derived from what Origen and Basil call an ancient tradition, that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, was slain between the porch and the altar, for bearing witness to Christ's miraculous birth. This was probably adopted, not to say invented, because Christ seems to trace the murders from the first, which was that of Abel, down to the last whose blood was shed before vengeance came upon Jerusalem. But I am inclined to the first opinion, as best supported by Scripture; and Christ may be supposed to reckon him the last of the martyred prophets, who was last in the sacred record.

In whatever way we settle this question, which is more difficult than important, the whole weight of the vengeance due to innocent blood was to fall on that generation to which Christ preached. If any ask, Where was the justice of visiting on one generation, not only its own sins, but those of its most remote predecessors? I answer, No man will suffer more than he deserves; and in this sense, the son shall not bear the iniquities of his fathers. God, however, is not bound to visit each generation with merited judgments; but may reserve his wrath for that period in which he judges it will best answer the ends of moral government. The sins of the fathers should be a beacon, not an example, to the sons; but these, if they imitate their ancestors' crimes, adopt them, and make them their own; and when patience has been suffi-

ciently prolonged, the next sin becomes the signal for vengeance, which must be tremendous, in order to pay a long arrear. May our country take warning; for the blood of persecution, not yet repented of, is crying to heaven against her; and woe to that generation that shall add the last drop to the cup!

The remaining woe which we are called to consider is pronounced for hindering the salvation of men: Luke xi. 52.

It does not appear that the Scriptures were taken away from the mass of the people; for Christ always appeals to the multitude as able to read them. But the Divine word was buried under a load of additions, in the form of traditions, or rabbinical comments, whose authority was made to supersede the law of God. What then shall we say of those who place the Bible in the Index Expurgatorius, or list of prohibited books, along with the writings of Voltaire or Rousseau? And how much more guilty are professed Protestants, who oppose the free circulation of the Scriptures, and will not suffer them to speak for themselves, but insist on their being accompanied by some productions of men! Justly was it said, by one of our earliest reformers, "They who oppose the reading of God's word, envy the salvation of men." Our Lord says, they shut up the kingdom of heaven; for it is entered by the door of knowledge and faith, of which the Scriptures are the key. He who takes these away, either by preventing their free circulation, or by obscuring their sense and diminishing their authority, shuts up the kingdom. What a crime! They entered not in themselves. No man can hinder another's salvation without obstructing his own; and to the perdition thus incurred, will be added the punishment due to those who have blood of murdered souls crying to heaven for vengeance against them.

Under this woe many have sunken into ignorance, wickedness, torpor, and death; while others have risen in proportion as they have promoted the circulation and knowledge of the word of God. When the people of Spain eagerly received the Scriptures in their own tongue, the priests seized the precious volume and committed it to the flames. But the

countries that enjoy the free use of the Scriptures are rising to dominion over those that have taken away the key of knowledge. The kingdom of the beast, full of darkness, is devoured with envy and vexation of heart. Hear the warning voice, "Come out of her, my people, and be not partaker of her sins, lest ye be overtaken with her woes and plagues." But, alas! the pride and malice of men are too often aggravated by the admonitions of heaven! For, while Christ said these things, "the Scribes and Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him."

Let us, however, not turn away from this benevolent severity unprofited. Shun the pharisaic religion, which was, and still is, the ruin of the Jews. View the law of God as the rule for the heart, as well as life, and as too broad and strict and spiritual to give justification of life for our imperfect obedience. Learn by it to flee to Christ, who "is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

At Christ's bidding, beware of the lofty pretenders to sanctity who arrogantly assume authority over the souls of men. Meekness, modesty, mercy, and active benevolence, are the characteristics of genuine religion, in every age, and under every dispensation. Counteract the cruelty of those who would shut the kingdom of heaven against such as are desirous of entering; promote the free circulation and use of the Scriptures; and unfold the grace of the Gospel, in opposition to the intolerable yoke of the law of works. Show that you have well employed the key of knowledge to find entrance for yourselves, by acting on the spirit of the purest and loftiest zeal for the universal diffusion of the word of God.

LECTURE XXII.

AGAINST HYPOCRISY AND COVETOUSNESS.

LUKE xii.

THE Pharisee, who had invited Christ to dine with him, seems to have been surrounded by others of that sect, and Jesus was accompanied by his own disciples. His faithful conversation so irritated and provoked the false professors, that they rose and went away, to lay snares for him; leaving him to go forth from the house. Finding around the door what the Evangelist calls "myriads of the crowd," he took this opportunity of addressing, not them, but, in their hearing, his own disciples. For Jesus was far above the infirmity of those who are so disturbed by the contradiction of opponents as to be made contentious and wrathful, and alike unfit and unwilling to instruct and benefit friends. With fidelity he withstood the loftiest professors of piety, the accredited doctors of the law, and, with a meek and lowly heart, he turned himself instantly to those he loved, pouring into their bosoms the instructions that should save them from that most insidious and deadly of all evils, false religion. This he did in the presence of myriads; for though the philosophers, falsely so called, had one doctrine for the initiated, and another for the multitude, Christ is transparent as the light, and opens all his heart to every man that will look in and see his mind. The crowd was so eager to hear him, that they trod one upon another; but this produced no such pernicious effect upon him as we often see follow from what is called popularity; for here all is simplicity, and fidelity, and exalted devotion.

I. Against hypocrisy he delivers a faithful warning; v. 1—12.

From his lips we should receive what we are so slow to take from others. As we cannot search the heart, the charity that thinketh no evil will be slow to suspect others of hypocrisy, and if we are not blessed with this happy spirit, we are not the persons whose warnings will be much heeded, nor indeed are the uncandid fit judges of sincerity. Hear, then, the Searcher of hearts and the Saviour of men giving lessons on this subject, which so deeply affects our present acceptance with God, and our everlasting weal. There are two kinds of hypocrites, and Christ charges us to avoid both.

The first kind of hypocrites are those who make false pretences to a religion which they do not possess. "He began to say, first of all, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." A similar charge was given to the disciples, on a more private occasion, when they were together in a boat, and "had forgotten to take bread with them." Now, before an immense crowd, he reminded them, that, as leaven is hidden in meal, and serves to make the bread hollow, and light, so the characteristic of the Pharisees was insincerity, which makes the heart hollow and callous in the sight of God.

Religion being an affair of conscience, in which it has to do with the omniscient God, what can be such an insult to him as to put on before men an appearance of piety, which we know that we do not possess? Is not this a challenge to omniscience, to try if it can detect, or to justice, to see whether it can avenge, the cheat? What can be the use of putting on this cloak? What does it avail to deceive men? Has not God said, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed?" The most secret thing that we have said or done shall be as openly published as if it were proclaimed by the crier, on the house-tops, where, it seems, that public proclamations were made, as in Mohammedan countries they go up on the minarets to announce the hour of prayer. When, therefore, God shall unmask hypocrites, before the world, and they shall stand naked, in all the deformity of insincerity, will it be any compensation to reflect that those who now despise and abhor, once admired and praised us?

Beware, then, of a sin which will produce no ultimate good, and has a tendency to generate all evil. For the habitual practice of deception provokes God to give us up to hardness of heart. If we are contented to sin before him, because man cannot see; and if we are impious enough to say, in effect, "It is only God that knows what we are;" he may be expected to say, then, "I will expose you before those whose judgment you regarded more than mine, and all men shall see your shame." Hypocrisy fits us for any crime. Who but a hypocrite, like Judas, could have perpetrated his foul deed? Whoever hardens his soul to the pitch of acting a part in religion, which he knows to be insincere, may be expected to make up his mind to any evil. If, my dear friends, you love your souls, if you would shrink from all that is foul in crime, and all that is horrible in punishment, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. Suffer no sinister motives to influence you in your profession of the fear of God, but lay your soul naked before him, and, at all hazards, maintain sincerity in your religious profession, which should be taken up purely for the sake of the soul, of God, and of eternity.

The second kind of hypocrites, are those who shrink from professing the religion that they do possess: v. 4—12.

This, which has been called a left-handed hypocrisy, is

This, which has been called a left-handed hypocrisy, is sometimes the result of an excessive dread of the former. Many shrink from professing what they feel, through dread of pretending to what they do not feel. For fear of being insincere, they act insincerely. It is no more left to our choice, whether we will profess religion, than whether we will possess it. But it must not be forgotten, or concealed, that, with this morbid dread of hypocrisy, there is frequently combined a secret cowardice, a shrinking from danger, an unwillingness to bear our full share of the weight of the cross, which every disciple of Christ must take up. Against this, therefore, our Lord warns us, in the most energetic terms. "I say to you, my friends;" then hear it, ye that aspire to this as the most exalted honour, to rank among the friends of Christ; "fear

not them that kill the body." The sword pointed at your breast, the loaded pistol presented to your heart, the executioner's axe suspended over your head, is not that at which you should turn pale. Why? Because when they have killed your body, "after that there is nothing more that they can do." "But I will warn you whom ye shall fear—him who can kill your body," without sword, or pistol, or axe, or fire, or poisons, and then has power to inflict something far worse than death, "to cast into hell," to place in endless torment that soul that survives the body. For who needs to be reminded, that these words of our Lord are founded, not on the doctrine that there is nothing in man but the conformation of the body; for then there would be nothing more that God himself could do, after killing the body; but on the commonly received opinion, that man is a compound being, and that, when the body is dead, there is a principle surviving and capable of feeling torment in hell. If any attempt to avoid this conclusion, by saying that God can destroy us in hell, after the resurrection at the last day; we reply, that this will not be doing some-thing more to us after killing the body, but after raising it to life again, which is an idea totally opposite to that which Christ suggests. Hear him, then, say unto you, "Fear him that can kill the body, and then do unutterably more—cast you into hell." For what is the death of the body, to the perdition of the soul? The body dies in a moment; the soul lasts for ever. The sufferings of the flesh are but such as a beast might feel; but the anguish of the spirit is such as Satan and fallen angels, those heirs of the utmost perdition, endure. Let, then, the fear of man be overpowered and annihilated by the fear of the sovereign arbiter of souls, whose awfully glorious majesty demands to be feared, while his infinite benevolence and grace deserve to be trusted and loved.

Nor let the thought enter your mind, that if he suffer man to kill your body, he cares not for you. Even one of those sparrows, five of which are sold for two farthings, is not forgotten, amidst the careful arrangements of Providence; and

each hair of your head is numbered; so attentive is God to every thing that concerns you. Dismiss your fears, then, for you are of more value than many sparrows, in the sight of Him who stamps value on what he pleases, and has set such a price on you, as "not to spare his own Son, but freely gave him up for you all." "In the hour of danger, therefore, when death, in its most horrid forms, shall stare you in the face, make confession of me," says Christ, "before hostile men, and I will confess you, before the angels of God, who shall be assembled at the great day of doom. For though I may seem to neglect you, when I leave you to suffer the death of the body, it will be enough for you, if I confess you in that hour, when murdered bodies shall be raised in glory, and death be vanquished. But if, on the contrary, you deny me before men, fearing lest they should kill you, what death shall seize you, when I deny you before the angels of God, and declare that 'I never knew you!' For though I forgive those who speak a word against me, to propitiate my enemies in the hour of danger, you would, by denying me, impute the witness of the Holy Ghost, who seals my Gospel by his miraculous gifts, to an evil and deceptive spirit." That blasphemy should never be forgiven and sin never forgiven, brings down upon the unpardoned wretch the thunderbolt of wrath, that will crush it to the lowest hell. "Fear not, then, but trust the Spirit of truth; and when cited into the synagogue, and before magistrates and authorities, feel not anxiety about your defence; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you at the moment what you shall say." Have we not seen, in the history of martyrs, that a divine inspiration has made them wise as an angel of God, and put such words into their mouth that "all their adversaries could not gainsay or resist?" If the mention of a sin against the Holy Ghost that shall never be forgiven, should generate dread, let the thought of his faithful promptings in the hour of danger inspire you with confidence in him as a compassionate friend.

II. Against covetousness a warning is delivered, from v. 13—21.

Of those divine monitions that should have filled the soul with thought of the overwhelming importance of eternity, one of the company made no other use than to say to himself, " Now is the time to obtain an authoritative sentence, which shall 'compel my brother to divide with me the inheritance.' But what a repulse our Saviour gave! "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you? There are tribunals established in the land, to settle such disputes; and my business is with the soul and religion." Seeing that covetousness was the root of this solicitude about the inheritance, Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of it." So much is it the easily besetting sin of men, that they need to guard their hearts against it with jealous care. They, indeed, cloak the sin, under the pretence of prudent, necessary care to provide what is needful for the body; but neither the happiness nor the safety of a man's life depends on the abundance of his property; so that the rich should take care " not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." To confirm this axiom, and make it more vivid and impressive, by the force of example, our Lord uttered the following parable, in which he shows that all the abundance of a rich man could not keep him alive; for even while we live it is not the vast stores in the barns, but the modicum on the table that supports.

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth abundantly," which filled him, not with gratitude, but with anxiety, that he exclaimed, What shall I do? What else would a poor man say, when he knew not where to obtain the next meal? There is, indeed, more anxiety frequently produced by abundance than by want. "I have no where to bestow my goods;" for many a rich man is more troubled to know what to do with his possessions, than the poor man is, how to obtain property. The thought does not seem to have entered this man's mind, that, if God has favoured me with abundant harvests, I should lay out some portion of his blessings on the poor, and in the promotion of religion, which is the first of all interests. He determines to pull down his barns and

build greater, and there bestow all his goods, laying up corn for many years. This is the language of one who lived not in a commercial country, where corn may be soon brought to market and exchanged for money. In the East, immense granaries are provided, where corn is kept for many years. But the brand of sin is on this speech; "I will say to my soul, Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

This shows that the essence of covetousness lies, not in the mere wish to accumulate, or to keep property; for the man forms a plan for taking his ease, and spending his wealth on eating and drinking, and enjoying himself. But the sinfulness of covetousness lies in its selfishness; for while one covetous man dotes on the enjoyment of accumulating, another sets his heart on spending his riches in personal gratifications. But, in every covetous mind, selfishness operates, as the Apostle hints, by placing trust in uncertain riches, fancying that this can secure to us that enjoyment which depends on God alone. "Take thine ease," is the language of many who now labour hard to be rich. To acquire a fortune, and then retire to live at ease, is the ambition of the tradesman and the merchant. But it is guilty; for it is founded on false views of human life, which, as the seed time for eternity, should be spent in useful employment. "Work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work;" we must cease at once to work and live. " Eat, drink, and be merry," is, in the estimation of many, perfectly lawful, if a man can afford it. But against this, the voice of God thunders, " If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. Through the spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, and ye shall live." Eating and drinking, and the enjoyment of ease, are not the end for which we were sent into the world. If the wicked live to eat, the pious eat to live; and the enjoyment of the pleasures of life is lawful, only when used as relaxation from labour, the unbending of the bow, to give it greater tension and force.

Wise as the speech of the rich man may appear to many, and multitudes who are called sensible men utter it in their

hearts, if not with their lips, God answered it, by saying, "Thou fool." For heaven has branded all sin with the mark of folly; and this man, with all his prudent forethought for many years, fancied that, because he was provided with indulgences for a long time, he must live long to enjoy them. What folly to look so far forward as to many years, and forget to provide against that which may happen this very night—death! How many have laboured half a century for a fortune, and died as soon as they acquired it! Some have built fine houses, and not lived to inhabit them. "This built fine houses, and not lived to inhabit them. "This built fine houses, and not lived to inhabit them. "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." For God, the arbiter of life, has not promised to give us a day's notice. We talk, indeed, of our lease being for threescore years and ten; but, in reality, we are always tenants at will; and when our soul is required of us, what can goods, laid up in store for many years, avail, to procure one moment's respite? Then whose shall these "things be which thou hast provided?" Thou hast prepared them for thyself; but man "heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them." Our intended heirs may never possess our fortunes; but those of whom we never thought, and the last that we them." Our intended heirs may never possess our fortunes; but those of whom we never thought, and the last that we should have wished, may call our goods their own. But what does it avail to us, who shall possess our money, or houses, or lands? Such a fool is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. Many think themselves rich, because they have barns "full of all manner of store;" while they are not really rich, if they are not so with regard to God, and the "durable riches of righteousness;" the favour of him who alone can make us blessed in the treasury of heaven; the everlasting folicity that shall the treasury of heaven; the everlasting felicity that shall satisfy the soul, through all the extent of its endless being. Ye rich poor men, pity and pray for the poor rich men.

Our Lord now repeats the same counsels that he had

Our Lord now repeats the same counsels that he had given in his sermon on the mount, to which my hearers are referred; but he adds also an address, which not being introduced there, demands our attention, as a sequel to this solemn parable. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." His disciples,

whom Jesus was now addressing, seemed, amidst the myriads that crowded round him, like a little flock of kids, as the prophet says. If we make numbers the criterion of religion, as the church of Rome loved to do till its numbers declined, and those of protestants increased, we shall condemn the disciples of Christ, who were few, and exalt his enemies, who were many. But, "if few are chosen," they are precious; and though poor and destitute of earthly store, laid up in barns for many years, they are forbidden to fear, since it is "their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom." A king may grant to his servants treasures which he may not bestow upon his son, because there is reserved for him the succession to the throne, which includes all things. So our heavenly Father may leave many rich men in possession of more than he bestows on his own children. These may be few and poor, God having reserved some better things for them, and, in his good pleasure, given them an everlasting kingdom, which shall make them blessed, when earth and all its possessions are burnt up. What reason, then, have they to fear? Alexander gave away so liberally to his friends, that they asked him what he reserved for himself; and he answered, "Hope." Hope, then, of what is laid up for them in heaven, and not fear of what they may want upon earth, is the proper temper of the heirs of glory.

III. Against unpreparedness for death the next warning is directed.

This also is a kind of practical application of the parable of the rich fool. Amidst his dreams of future enjoyment, he forgot that death might come that night. We, however, ought to be like servants left at home to wait for their lord, who was gone out to a wedding. What, then, is the temper, and what the posture that becomes us? Is it not that of constant watchful expectation? Should not such servants keep their loins girded, unlike those who had thrown off their clothes, and were lying down to sleep? Dressed to receive their master, they should keep the lights burning, and the whole house fit to receive their lord; and should not we be always in a state and frame fit for death? Can they who

know not but the next moment they may die, ever indulge, for one moment, a frame in which they would not wish to die? Should we expose ourselves to the necessity of uttering that unavailing cry, "O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more?" Should we not, like servants who are ready to open immediately their lord knocks, always be prepared to say, "Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly?" "For we know not whether our Lord will come at the second watch, or in the third watch;" in the middle of life, or in old age; and therefore we have no excuse, if we should be found unprepared.

How blessed is he who lives like Leighton, of whom his biographer said, that, "for thirty years I never saw him in any other frame than that in which I should wish to die." For the Lord will honour such servants, as if the master girded himself, and seated them at table, and waited on them to see that they were well feasted. "An abundant entrance shall be administered to them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ." Great honour and felicity our Redeemer confers on those who live "looking for and hasting to his coming." The most delightful deaths are those of Christians who have kept that hour constantly in view. I am, this moment, reminded of an obituary that has made me long to die. The departing saint said, "For many years this hour has scarcely ever been many minutes out of my waking thoughts." And why should we suffer it to escape? Is not the hour of midnight and sleep, when men are off their guard, chosen by the housebreakers? For "if the owner of the dwelling knew the moment when the thief would come, he would watch, and not suffer his house to be broken into." And has not our Lord said, "that he would come as the thief in the night, in an hour that we know not?" Even to the watchful, and the aged Christian, death comes too often by surprise. Then be ye always ready, that if the Son of man come when ye think not, ye may still welcome him, and "enter into the joy of your Lord."

This is the more binding on professed Christians, because we have been so fully warned by our Redeemer; and "he

that knew his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." All we shall gain by our religious knowledge and profession, if we are found at last unprepared for death, will be severer condemnation. For there is, under the Christian dispensation, with all its sovereign grace, a wondrous and holy moral rule; and "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" "Where much is given, there much is required;" and what advantages are conferred on us by the ministration and warnings of our Lord! Will not our superior knowledge necessarily inflict on us more severe torture, if death come upon us in an unprepared state? Will not the punishment of a professed disciple of Christ be aggravated by the recollection of his privileges, and professions, and obligations? But these considerations, however alarming, and the justice of God's retribution, however awful, are allied with grace. For what is their design, but to induce us to improve the high advantages we possess, to live in constant expectation of our Lord's coming, so that, let death come when it may, we may say to it, "Where is thy sting?"

Peter, struck, probably, with the applicability of these

Peter, struck, probably, with the applicability of these considerations to the Apostles, who had received the highest advantages that man can possibly enjoy, and feeling that they were bound especially to improve them, asked whether our Lord intended these warnings for them exclusively, or designed to warn all. The direct reply to this, we may gather from Mark xiii. 37, where a similar address is thus answered: "What I say to you, I say to all, watch." But in an indirect way, the Apostles were now reminded that they were peculiarly bound to receive his warning, inasmuch as they were made "stewards of the household of faith." Blessed is that servant, who, being placed over his fellows, to give them their portion of meat in due season, shall diligently attend to this charge, and be found labouring for the good of the church. When the Lord comes, such a servant shall be exalted to the rank of ruler. "Ye are my friends," says he, "who have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint to you a kingdom, that ye shall eat and drink at my table, and sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve

tribes of Israel." From the hour that Judas was cast out, the Apostolate was purified, and our Lord said, "Ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken to you." What honours now attend the Apostles, and shall attend them through eternity! Ah, how many have pretended to be their successors, in office, rank, and power, and have made those impious and ignorant pretences an excuse for presenting an awful contrast to the Apostolic character! But such pretenders have said, in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth his coming; they have beaten their Lord's servants;" they have given themselves to gluttony, drunkenness, and all impiety; and have caused the ungodly to blaspheme the Christian name. The Lord, however, is coming, when they look not for him. He will cut them asunder; for "terrible is the vengeance of his temple!" He will appoint them their portion with the unbelievers, or unfaithful; treating as infidels, those who have treated as such all who would not submit to their wicked dominion. "Judgment will begin at the house of the Lord," which has been polluted by such "false apostles, evil workers," and no one can be sufficiently aware of the retribution that awaits what is called Christendom. Infidels and heathens are innocent persons, compared with many who have made lofty pretensions to authority and official sanctity in the Christian church. God, who is jealous for his holiness, will vindicate the honour of his religion on those who have made it infamous, by their armed violence, and their unchristian conduct. He will set them as flaming monuments of his justice, by the light of whose fires all the world shall see, that "strong is the Lord God that judgeth them."

IV. Against false expectations of the kingdom of Christ, the last warning is directed. "Suppose ye that I am come to send peace on the earth? I tell you, no; but rather division."

The Apostles, seeing in Christ a far different person from him whom their nation looked for, imagined that the power of his grace would subdue all hearts to obedience, as he had bowed theirs, and thus wars and divisions would soon cease, by the universal subjugation of the world to the sceptre of Christ. But he undeceives them. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he should destroy the works of the devil." A duel was to be fought between the two opposing principles of light and darkness, holiness and sin, benevolence and malevolence. The struggle was to be long and dreadful, as the victory would be sure and glorious. "I am come to send a fire on the earth." The love he kindled in the hearts of his Apostles, and still causes to burn in all believers, by his coming for our salvation, stimulates to such exertions for the salvation of the world, that the enemies of Christ's kingdom are provoked, and a conflagration is created, that has kept the world in flames. "They that are born after the flesh persecute those that are born after the Spirit." But what did Christ wish? That this might be avoided? He loves peace on earth, and good will to men; but not the peace of the grave, not good will towards men's sins. For the sake, therefore, of the greater good that should result from this conflict, he wishes to see the fire already kindled. What, then, was he waiting for? His own death. This was the baptism he was to be baptised with, a baptism of blood. But such was his desire to commence the dreadful battle with the powers of evil, that he says, "how am I straitened, till it be accomplished!" He was as eager to meet death as we are to avoid it; and in order to kindle in our hearts an unquenchable love for himself, for souls, and for the kingdom of righteousness, he panted for the cross.

When "the serpent bruised his heel in death," and baptised him with agonies and blood, he crushed the serpent's head, and said, "It is finished. The foundation is laid for victory and triumphs; now, to arms! to arms! ye soldiers of the cross; go into all the world, and claim the kingdom for the Lord." The summons was obeyed; and what was the consequence? The battle began, which has lasted ever since; and shall not end till the shout be heard, "Hallelujah; for the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ." But wherever the preaching of the cross proved salvation to some in a house, there followed division, three against two, and two against

three. "The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." v. 53.

For they who were converted, sought to convert the rest; and those who were unconverted, struggled to win back the convert, or, failing in this, to destroy him. Judea was soon in a flame, and Paul in tears, not so much for himself as for his brethren, "his kinsmen according to the flesh." The fire ran along upon the ground, and the heathen lands were all in a blaze. The priests and the worshippers of idols cry, "These men that have turned the world upside down have come hither also. For this Paul has, through all Asia, perverted much people, saying, that they are no gods that are made with hands." If earthquakes, or famines, afflicted the Roman empire, the cry was raised, "The gods are angry, because their worship is neglected;" and Christians are suffered to live. Rome pagan was, however, soon changed into Rome papal, and the great red dragon that had thirsted for the blood of the Christians, was succeeded by a "harlot with a cup of abominations in her hand, and drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus." Thus the fire was kept burning; and it will burn, if not with open, with smothered and concealed force, till the kingdom of Satan be utterly cast down, and that of Christ enjoy a universal and complete triumph. "Hasten it, Lord, in thy time."

The conflict in its severer form, was even "now" commencing, as Christ was advancing towards the cross. The "Captain of salvation" led the way, and the army of the faithful followed. Therefore, he said to the crowd, When the signs of approaching storms, or heat, are seen in the skies, you understand them well; you make your prognostications and are not deceived; but, unfaithful to your own consciences, hypocrites as ye are, why do ye not, even without my warnings, see the signs of the time of approaching conflict? Ye have heard my denunciations of the Phari-

sees, the favourite leaders in religion, ye have seen their rage against me and mine, and why do ye not hear the note of preparation for the great battle of the day of Almighty God? Why are ye not alarmed for yourselves, "lest ye be found fighting against God?" "Why do ye not judge of your own selves," with that prudence which makes you weather wise, what is just, and right, and necessary, for your own safety, against greater dangers than those that arise from change of weather? For as you would deem it prudent in a suit at law, where you were likely to be cast, to make up the matter with your adversary, lest the suit should end in your being thrown into prison; so, in this contest with the Almighty judge, your first course should be, to be reconciled with him; embrace his friendship, through Christ, the great reconciler; without this, when God shall rise to judgment, we shall be cast and delivered over to eternal death. For if we are not rescued from the prison of hell, till we have paid the last mite, will not our punishment be eternal? What payment can we make? Will his justice be satisfied by the sufferings of creatures who will "gnaw their tongues for anguish, and blaspheme the God of heaven?" "Flee for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before you in the Gospel, by believing on Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come." Then, away, anxiety, care and fear. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

LECTURE XXIII.

CENSORIOUSNESS CONDEMNED.

Luke xiii. 1-9.

Often are we reminded how numerous are the advantages we derive from the lowly form in which Christ appeared, and the humble rank of life in which he moved. thus gave us an example more generally useful, than it could have been if he had ranked among kings, of whom there necessarily are but few to profit by such a pattern; while as a poor man, he was more easily accessible than kings can be, even though they cultivate the utmost condescension. But the full measure of the benefit we derive from our Saviour's living in the middle, or lower station of life, arises from his own disposition; since the distant and reserved, not to say the haughty and morose, are inaccessible, whatever station they occupy. You know, however, the grace of our Lord, that he was not only meek and lowly of heart, but kind, affable, sociable, showing that "his delights were with the sons of men," and that he came among us because he loved us, and designed to do us good. For this reason, he mingled freely with society, was to be found where men assembled in crowds, throwing himself open to the familiar knowledge of all, affording them opportunity of introducing any subjects to his notice, and of hearing his opinion on every theme. Of this, we have to-day the full benefit, for he, being at one of the great festivals of the Jews, to which persons came up from all parts of the country, "there were present at that feast some who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices." Our divine teacher availed himself of this opportunity to warn us,

I. To beware of censoriousness when we see the judgments of God executed: v. 1—5.

Some have referred this event to the history of that Judas of Galilee, of whom Gamaliel spake.* Judas is said to have taught, that no man should be called Lord, and that it was unlawful for the Jews to pay tribute to the Romans, or offer sacrifices for their emperor; on which account Pilate came upon this party, and slew them while sacrificing for the success of their attempt to shake off the yoke. But this seems conjecture rather than a history. Let us confine ourselves to what is here said concerning the judgment of God, the censures of men, and the warnings of Christ.

1. The judgments of God, seen in the Galileans, and in those on whom the tower of Siloam fell.

The Galileans are known by the testimony of Josephus, their countryman, to have been a restless, seditious race, who seem to have provoked the last war against the Romans, which brought destruction on the Jewish nation. Fretting under a foreign yoke, they entered into a conspiracy to shake it off; and they were probably offering sacrifices for their success, when the Roman governor came upon them, and slaughtering them, made their blood flow along with that of the animals they offered on the altar. This Pilate may be supposed to have done, because he knew the Jews considered every thing connected with the death of the human body as ceremonially polluting. Those who came up to keep the feast at Jerusalem, mentioned to our Lord the recent occurrence on which he founded his instructions. To give additional force to these, he reminds them of another alarming event. From the rock on which Jerusalem stood, a rivulet flowed into the valley below, and was there received into a basin, which formed what is called a fishpool. To secure the possession of this, a tower was built, which, by some unascertained cause, fell, and eighteen persons, who were either in or near it, were crushed to death. Our Redeemer was probably aware, that such thoughts and comments were formed on this event as on the affair in Galilee. These two

occurrences are, therefore, employed to serve us as guides in judging of the events of Providence. The Galilean slaughter was by the hands of men, the other more immediately by the providence of God; and thus we learn how to view whatever happens around us, whether by human instrumentality, or by divine power, which creatures cannot control. We are daily surrounded by events of one or other of these characters; and it is of the highest importance to us to know how to view them, that we may neither pass them by with indifference, nor put such constructions on them as are false and injurious. Consider, then,

2. The censures of men, who are unwise enough to think "these were sinners above all others, because they suffered such things." Here a difficulty naturally occurs; for it may be said, Are we not charged to regard the Lord in all his ways, whether of providence or grace, of judgment or of mercy? Is it not said of the Jews, "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see?" "Because they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands; therefore, he shall destroy them and not build them up." This is most true; but still Christ warns us not hastily to conclude that they who endure great calamities, and fall under awful judgments, "are sinners above all others, because they suffer these things." For it is expressly declared, that "God's judgments are a great deep, his ways are past finding out, and his footsteps are not known." We, therefore, are utterly incompetent to sit in judgment upon our fellow-creatures, and pass sentence upon their characters, by what we see befal them. For "all things come alike to all, and no man knoweth love or hatred by what happens upon earth." The Apostle says, "Judgment shall begin at the house of God," who often chastises his people first; for which he gives this reason, "You only have I known of all people on the face of the earth; therefore, you will I punish." Were not the friends of Job utterly mistaken in their harsh judgment concerning him? They concluded that he had, under the semblance of piety, hidden some enormous iniquity. So that he ought to confess himself a hypocrite, and flee from his sins,

that God's judgments, which had so awfully overwhelmed him, might be turned away. He rightly said, "Till I die will I retain my integrity; for I know that my Redeemer liveth, and shall stand at the latter day on the earth," to judge the secrets of all hearts. God testified, at last, that he was righteous, and that his friends had not spoken aright. An instructive parable was delivered by the prophet Jeremiah, to correct the false judgment of the Jews, concerning those who were first carried away captive to Babylon.—Two baskets of figs, the one good, the other evil, were exhibited; but the good represented those that were first made captives, and the evil those that remained at home. We read a long list of sufferings endured by the Apostles, and by the ancient confessors, who "were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword, who wandered in sheep skins and goat skins, in dens and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;" but it is added," of whom the world was not worthy." If we judge those to be the greatest sinners who are the greatest sufferers, what shall we say of the Son of God, who was, beyond all others, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?" Shall we join with the Jews, in esteeming him "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" for his own crimes? This, you will perhaps say, is a singular case, since Christ alone answered for "sins not his own." I grant it; but this one case would show, that the rule will not hold universally good, that great suffering proves aggravated guilt.

How, then, it may be asked, should we look at the judg-

How, then, it may be asked, should we look at the judgments of God? They prove the existence of sin and the justice of heaven; for even Christ was afflicted for sins which he took upon himself; for "surely he bore our sins and carried our sorrows. He bore the sin of many." We may also, sometimes learn particular sins from special judgments; but this is a very difficult and delicate affair, in which we should proceed with great caution. In fact, we should rather argue the judgments from the sins, than the sins from the judgments; that is to say, we should know men's sin by other evidence, and not infer it from judgments. When we know that men sin in a particular manner, if we see appro-

priate judgments fall, we may learn the justice of God. Yet even this, it is safer for us to do concerning ourselves than others. When Joshua inflicted on Adonibezek a remarkable punishment, by cutting off his thumbs and great toes, he said, "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table. As I have done, so God hath requited me." If he had not seen the hand of God in this, would he not have been blind? When David, after his fall, was cursed by Shimei, he said, "I will not avenge myself on him, for the Lord has said to him, curse David;" and when Eli heard that the ark of God was taken, and his two sons, Hophni and Phineas, were slain in one day, could he have avoided recalling the judgment denounced by Samuel?

It is good and profitable, though bitter and humbling, to read our sin in our punishment, and to justify God in his severest judgments. But the question here is, not what we should think of our own afflictions, but how we should construe the judgments that overtake others. Without manifest call and warrant, we should not attempt to interpret these strokes at all against the man that is smitten. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." But, when we have seen and known the sins, we may be so struck with the punishment, as scarcely to be able to refrain from seeing the justice of God; and we may be called, as the church is in the Revelations, by the voice of God, to see and adore his righteousness, saying, "Rejoice over Babylon, O Zion, and ye holy Apostles and Prophets; for God has avenged you on her. They have shed the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus, and God has given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." But, after all, we cannot justly conclude, that those on whom the greatest judgments fall are the vilest sinners; for God may see reason to reserve the worst transgressors to the last judgment day. This is a world of patience, because it is a world of probation; and there is another state of being, in which God will vindicate his justice by dealing with "every one according to his deeds."

Hear, then,

3. The warning of Christ. "Except ye repent, ye shall all

likewise perish."

It is obvious that we are not taught to conclude that all who do not repent will suffer like the Galileans, in having their blood mingled with their sacrifices, or will, like those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, perish under the ruins of a building. But we are to take this, and the warnings of God's Providence, as proofs that our lives are in his hands; that he has many ways of cutting off men in their sins; and that awful are his judgments when he visits for iniquity. "He that covereth his sins shall not present; for only he that confesseth and forceleth them shall prosper; for only he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." Every judgment, therefore, should remind us of sin; not so much our brother's as our own; for though we are apt to prefer interfering with that which does not belong to us, and sitting in judgment on our neighbour, our Lord here teaches us, that our business is with our own sins; and that his judgment should make us say, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?"

Perdition awaits unpardoned sin. Of this every judg-

ment that God exercises in the earth should remind us. But especially death; and death overtaking men in sin, should be as a peal of thunder in our ears,—"Repent, or perish."—"The wages of sin is death; and if the righteous be scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner be scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If such judgments fall on men, even in this life, where patience, rather than vengeance, reigns, what may be expected in that world where patience will resign the throne to justice, and sinners "will have judgment, without mercy?" At the sight of repentance, justice yields the administration to mercy; for, as God will not spare the impenitent, so

neither will he destroy the repentant. Yet men defer repentance, and call this, "putting the evil day afar off;" though repentance would put away the most awful visitations, or change them into angel messengers, to bear our souls to God! We live in the midst of death; for we are perpetually consuming our time; our life is but a vapour, and we are travellers through the intermediate region to the abode of death. To urge us to take this warning, we should consider that it was fulfilled on those to whom it was in vain given. The Jews told, in a censorious spirit, of those "whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices;" when, at the very moment, there was reason to fear they at heart concurred in the action of the seditious Galileans. They were, however, at last, partners with them in their sin, and in the retribution too. For, assembled at Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, in the midst of their sacrifices the Roman army came upon them, and virtually, or perhaps even literally, mingled their blood with that of their offerings. If the tower in Siloam fell and slew eighteen, the ruin of buildings, and the fall of towers and walls, formed a large part of the judgment by which the guilty people were punished and crushed, when God came upon them, and, by the army of Titus, fulfilled the threatening pronounced, "because they repented not."

To compel us, as it were, to take this counsel, we are com-

manded by Christ,

II. To beware of security, when the judgments of God are deferred: v. 6—9.

To man, who was placed, at first, in a garden, to dress and to keep it, the vegetable world affords a thousand interesting lessons, full of spiritual instruction. Among the products of the soil, the fig-tree stands conspicuous for beauty and for use; and its growth and culture are so peculiar, that we cannot be surprised to find it frequently employed in Scripture as a lesson to the church. One of these numerous instances, usually called the parable of the barren fig-tree, we have now to notice and improve.

The same depravity that, extinguishing the love of our neighbour, drives us into false and censorious judgments when we see him in great affliction, generates in us an inordinate self-love, and makes us conclude, equally without reason, that because we are not thus visited, we must be more innocent. This last perverse notion is put to shame by a parable which is so striking and important that it would have demanded a whole discourse, had I not been

led to those reflections which it suggests when commenting on the fig-tree which Christ miraculously blasted, just before his death.* We shall, therefore, now but hastily glance at what is said concerning the advantages afforded—the ill returns yielded—the sentence pronounced—and the intercession that procured delay of execution.

1. The advantages afforded. "A certain man had a figtree in his vineyard."

A vineyard was a favoured spot, separated from the rest of the earth, fenced and cultivated with care, for a special and valuable purpose; and such was the professed church of God among the Jews, who were "separated from all people on the face of the earth," as Moses said, "the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Many were the advantages which God afforded to the Jews, for he "showed his word unto Jacob, and his statutes and his judgments unto Israel," said the Psalmist. And for what purpose? David answers "that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws."

Though vineyards are intended for the growth of vines, in this there is said to have been a fig-tree, as we sometimes see lofty and widely spreading trees in the midst of a meadow, designed for raising only grass. In a vineyard, such a tree might be suffered to grow, provided it bore valuable fruits, and did good rather than harm. A fig-tree is chosen by our Lord, to exhibit persons living in the visible pale of the church. For as that tree was of a generous nature, and bore fruit that, in the East, formed an article, not merely of luxury, as with us, but of food; we are taught by it, that those who enjoy the benefits of the church of God should be trees of righteousness, abounding in fruits which are profitable to the good of man, and "to the glory and praise of God." The vine dresser, therefore, had a right to seek fruit from a tree so situated; and though it does not authorise us to consider God as forming false expectations, or being disappointed of his hopes, it teaches us that we are under peculiar moral obligations to bear good fruits, when we enjoy the means;

and that God has a right to demand this of us, and to complain when we fail. To this, conscience testifies: let us hearken to its voice. Think what our situation is in the Christian church compared with the rest of the world. We have the knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. This should be life eternal to us. Under the preaching of Christ, and him crucified, what advantages have we beyond those who, with the Christian name, are taught to cleave to works of law for salvation! From a faithful evangelical ministry, we should derive every advantage that means can furnish. "What could have been done more for my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" says Jehovah to Israel. But see,

2. The ill returns yielded. "The lord of the vineyard came seeking fruit and found none."

"Lo, these three years have I come seeking fruit." We might conclude that three years were mentioned, as harmonising with the machinery of the parable; because, though a man would wait patiently, if a tree did not bear fruit one year, or even a second, when the same barrenness was shown for a third year, he would begin to think of cutting it down. But while some have applied this to the three dispensations, of the patriarchs, of Moses, and of Christ; or to the three modes of government among the Jews, that of the republic, the kings, and the high priests; we are naturally led to think of the three years of Christ's ministry, which was now drawing to its close, and was to be followed by judgments on the guilty nation. They had not brought, as a people, any fruit worthy of the great advantages they had enjoyed, in such a ministry as that of Christ, who spake, not only with words of authority, far different from the scribes, but, also, with mighty signs and wonders, which God did by him, as they themselves knew. Where was the fruit of such privileges? What national repentance, or reformation, do we read of? What number of converts do we find, amidst the myriads that saw his mighty works, and heard his wondrous words? Year after year rolled away, and no such effect followed; and now the Saviour was hastening to his departure, and began to talk of judgments coming upon them; but all in vain.

Observe, however, it is not said this tree bore poisonous fruits, instead of figs; that it had killed men, instead of nourishing them; or even that its fruit was bitter and nauseous, producing disgust rather than the pleasant taste of the luscious figs. No; it bore nothing. This was its fault-barrenness. How long, then, shall we continue to make this our excuse, and plead our barrenness as our innocence, saying, "I have done nothing, and therefore I deserve no punishment!" This is, with many, the plea, though Christ has made it the charge. When we have enjoyed high advantages, and have been placed where we should have been fruitful, and done positive good to men and real service to God, it is vain to plead that we have done nothing, committed no murders, no thefts, no atrocious crime; for barrenness is a crime; to have done nothing is to have deserved the judgment of God. This, continued year after year, renders a case alarming, if not desperate; for the goodness of God, in sparing us, should lead us to repentance. If, instead of that, it fosters the notion of innocence, woe to us! Yet how many have gone on in this unprofitable way, with negative guilt, mistaken for positive innocence, more than three years! We have passed through the three periods of life, our childhood and youth were vanity; our riper years mere worldliness; and now we have advanced towards old age, and still we bring no fruit. But we are not alarmed, though life has been spent in doing nothing. Yet the patience that bears long, will not last always. "Moreover, God requireth that which is past;" he keeps a good reckoning, if we do not, and will remind us, at last, how many years he has looked on, and seen us bear no fruit. And this must be the case, till we believe in Christ for our salvation, for all other good things are the fruits of faith.

3. The sentence is proclaimed,—"Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

This is stronger in the original than in our translation; for it should be rendered, "Why does it even render the ground

useless?" intimating, that it not only bore no fruit correspondent with the favourable situation, but that it overshadowed other things, and, by its useless shade, rendered the soil barren. For, with all our foolish pleas of innocence, it is not true that we do nothing, while we bear no good fruit. Far from it. Those who do nothing good, do much mischief; for "one sinner destroys much good." He not only takes up the ground that might be occupied by some things useful, but he throws the shade of the upas tree, that poisons all around. The example of an unprofitable professor is most pernicious. If a statue of ice were placed in the spot where one of my hearers is now sitting, it not only would get no good from what I am saying, so that if many of these were substituted for the living men that are here, this icy congregation would destroy my hopes of usefulness; but each man of ice would throw around him a chilling atmosphere, that would lower the thermometer, and make all shiver with cold. Every unprofitable tree in God's vineyard is diffusing around it a withering influence, that blights the church of God, and chills the souls of believers, and dissipates the hopes of the ministers of Christ, whose hands hang down, spiritless, where they should be held up with the animation of hope. The barrenness of the Jews under Christ's ministry, was a stumbling block to the Gentiles; and, to this day, we are asked, "If Jesus Christ were all that you say he was, why do not the Jews believe on him?" Ah! let them say why. For mercy's sake, my dear hearers, for your own souls' sake, for others' sake, think what you are doing every moment you are doing nothing; and what death you spread around you, while you receive not life from Christ.

Justly, therefore, it was said, "Cut it down; why should it thus render the surrounding earth barren?" This sentence was now going forth against the sinful nation that heard Christ. They were trembling on the verge of ruin; their church was ready to pass away, as a candlestick moved out of its place; and their very name about to be blotted out, no more to appear as one among nations. If patience has in vain waited long for us, what but this sentence should sound in our ears? "Cut it down; cut it down; cut it down," A

thousand messengers are waiting to execute this sentence, swift as lightning. Cholera has breathed on the air to make it deadly; your horse or your carriage may, in a moment, throw you, a prostrate corpse, on the ground; your house may fall on you, and crush you in the ruins; the food you eat may poison you; or the secret hand of God may loose the cord of life, and you may die without a sigh, or a groan, or a struggle, cut down by an invisible hand, so that a jury of your countrymen will pronounce, "Died by the visitation of God." of God."

But what if none of these things should happen, as I grant they may not, is it, therefore, certain that you are not cut down? No; the very warning I am delivering may offend you, and you may go away resolved to hear no more. Ah! that was the very thing that we said; "Cut it down;" for, quitting the word because it was faithful, you fall from God's vineyard; you no longer are found in the fruitful hill, no more surrounded by the hedge of God's ordinances; but, cast out as a barren tree to the wide wilderness, your own sin is made your punishment. To escape God's judgment is impossible; flight brings you into his presence, darkness lays you naked to his eye, and all creation will conspire against you, if God says, "Cut it down." There is but one way of safety, that is, to bear fruit. Thank God, we have yet something to say about this; for now follows,

4. The intercession: v. 8—9.

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By this part of the parable, it is manifest that Christ intended to exhibit himself under the figure of a vine dresser; for he, in fact, came to cultivate the church by that best dispensation of religion, the preaching of the Gospel. Though they treated him most ungratefully, "he returned good for evil;" and when judgment would have gone forth against them, he interceded for delay, "Lord, let it alone this year also." On the cross, he pleaded for his murderers, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But I may adduce, as a grand practical proof of this intercession, our Sayiour's command to his Apostles. "to preach cession, our Saviour's command to his Apostles, "to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." This text has been so

eloquently unfolded by the celebrated Dr. Grosvenor, that I cannot but recommend his beautiful sermon to all who would wish to see the most glorious sentence of our Saviour's lips illustrated by the most eloquent discourse in our tongue. pursuance of the determination to give to the devoted nation that rejected and crucified Christ, space for repentance, the twelve Apostles, the Evangelists, and the first Christians, long pursued the ministry of mercy among the Jews exclusively; and even when the vision given to Peter, in the case of Cornelius, led to the offer of salvation to the Gentiles, the principle on which heaven acted, was developed in these words: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, who are Jews; but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us."* Such was the practical interpretation of the expression, "till I dig about it, and dung it." By trenching as we call it; that is, digging a kind of ditch near a tree, and putting in good earth; and, by affording abundant manure, that which was before barren may become fruitful. What could have been more favourable than the improved treatment of the Jewish nation, when the gospel was preached to them by the Apostles, with all the mighty signs, the gifts of tongues and of miracles, which they enjoyed; and when the Christian church was set up among them, with its divine charity, its beautiful simplicity, its exalted spirituality, its patient endurance of suffering, and its heroic martyrdoms? If the Jews had then borne fruit, happy had it been for them. There is apparently a chasm in the sentence, as it appears in our translation; for the word "well" is in italics, being supplied by the translators. But the original might be rendered without the appearance of a chasm, and without any supplement, which is always to be avoided if possible; for we might translate the Greek, "if perhaps it may bear fruit." This does not express a doubt in the divine mind, but conveys to us what should have been the effect of improved advantages bestowed on

the unbelieving people. Alas, this effect did not follow; but the persecution of the Apostles, especially for preaching to the Gentiles, consummated the guilt of the Jews, and hastened their doom.

For even the intercessor consents, that if, on suspension of judgment, and the bestowment of more exalted means of culture, the tree should not bear fruit, after that it should be cut down. The Romans came with their securis, or hatchet, as John the Baptist had given warning; "Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire." The strokes of the axe were mighty, and sounded loudly through the forest. Jerusalem was taken, after a tremendous siege, and the tree fell, shaking the earth, and terrifying the world with the dreadful judgment. And now their place, their nation, their temple, their church are gone; "for the children of Israel shall abide," says Hosea, "many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim."

What is the lesson we are called to learn? "Behold the goodness and the severity of God!" Rom. ii. 1—11.

Now let us dismiss for ever our censorious spirit, and cease to pronounce men sinners above all others, because they suffer more than others. Instead of this, let us occupy our souls in thinking only of repentance, and the certainty of perdition to the impenitent. Thus we shall substitute a profitable for a pernicious exercise of mind; reflections which are humbling and sanctifying to ourselves, for those which are often false in themselves, displeasing to God, and most injurious to our neighbour.

To promote this happier process, we should remember, that the judgment which is long deferred, will, at last, be most severe. For then, we shall be judged, not only for the sins we have committed, but for the abuse of that patience which delayed judgment; for the ungrateful returns we have rendered to him that interceded for us, saying, "Spare him yet another year;" for the improved advantages which were afforded us; and for the mischief we did, while we

cumbered God's earth, and rendered it barren. God of mercy, grant that the other alternative may be the event! For if it bear fruit, it shall be well indeed.

To promote this improvement, so essential to our escape from a fatal end, think how cutting it must be, to hear the very voice that in tones of pity cried, "Spare it," say at last, with calm acquiescence in our own perdition, "Thou shalt cut it down." What! shall I fall unpitied even by mercy herself? And shall the very Saviour, who could not, by all the agonies of the bitter death they were inflicting on him, be prevented from saying, "Father, forgive," be induced, by my abuse of his patience and kindness, to say, "Cut it down?" If incarnate mercy will speak thus, what must justice say? Will it not echo back in thunder, what mercy herself has uttered, and the echo be the more terrible on account of the original voice? Have you never seen a tree, once green and flourishing, felled by the axe, prostrated on the earth, its leaves all withered, its top cut off, its branches scattered, or bound up in faggots for the fire? And have you never seen the counterpart to this, in the kingdom of God? Have you not in your mind's eye, the once favoured soul, placed in a pleasant vineyard, where every thing conducive to salvation was enjoyed; but no fruit of repentance, or faith, or holiness, followed; and lo, the next time you beheld him, he was cast out into the world, he was become the companion of fools; you heard from his lips the profane sneer, the infidel jest; you saw the fiery or the fatuous look of the drunkard; you looked again, he was fallen by palsy, or apoplexy, he died guilty and despairing, and when you asked, Who did this? Mercy replied, "It was I that said, Cut it down!" O trifle not with her, while she says, "Spare him," lest you hear her say, "After this, thou shalt cut him down."

Pity, O Christian, the Jews, against whom this was spoken. Long have you seen the felled tree, with its branches scattered, as "when one cutteth and cleaveth wood on the earth." But there is hope of a national tree, if it be cut down. Then cry unto God, "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!"

LECTURE XXIV.

THE GREAT SUPPER.

LUKE xiv. 15-24.

Invited to the house of a chief Pharisee, on the Sabbath day, our Saviour requited the feast set before him, by such a discourse, that, if the host were wise, he must have said, "Oh! how sweet are thy words to my mouth; yea, sweeter than honey to my taste." And one of the company, wrapped in heavenly visions, actually exclaimed, "Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." But the faithfulness of Christ, which always keeps company with his grace, seized this opportunity to show how unworthily the heavenly feast is treated; not embraced by every one, at the earliest invitation, but rejected by those first invited, and welcomed only by those who were the most despised. This parable, therefore, is a striking comment on Christ's aphorism:—"There are first that shall be last, and last that shall be first."

I. Those who were first in invitation, and were last by their own rejection.

The Gospel of salvation is called a supper, as that meal was the principal one among the Jews, and, like dinner among us, was the grand entertainment to which numerous guests were invited. How fit to exhibit that feast of souls, which God makes for us in the salvation of his Son, in which the eternal love and grace of heaven, in Christ, the incarnate God, are the entertainment, and "joys unspeakable and full of glory," crown the feast. To this, the Jews had been originally invited, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, whose promises they held in their hands, as

cards of invitation. When the Saviour came, he sent forth his Apostles, to follow up his own ministry of mercy; for when God was manifest in the flesh, and still more when he had finished his work, wrought out a righteousness for us by his obedience unto death, and entered into the holiest of all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us, he sent down his Spirit to erect his church, with all its ordinances of grace. Then all things were ready, and the servants were charged "to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," saying, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the promises God made to the fathers; to you first, God, having raised up his son Jesus, has sent him to bless you, turning away every one from his iniquities."
"Come, for all things are ready." But see what a reception those who were first invited gave to the message of grace. "They all, with one consent, began to make excuse." Discordant consent, that contradicts the designs of mercy! Horrible harmony of men, that quarrels with the love of God! Infernal unanimity, when the jarring elements of the chaos of hell coalesce to oppose the grace of heaven! But such is the strange scene which this fallen world too often exhibits. They who can agree in nothing else, unite in this, that they all reject Christ, and despise religion, and ruin their own souls. But what are the mighty reasons that produced this guilty unanimity. Ah! these are various enough. Some prefer one thing, and some another; but all agree to exalt any thing above Christ. The excuses are divided by our Lord, into three classes, which we may call,
1. Property. One said, "I have bought a piece of ground,

and must needs go and see it."

Bought it! Then it is your own. Why should this hinder you from going to the feast? The land will be there when you come back. You are not afraid that it will be swallowed up by an earthquake, or inundated by a deluge. "But I must needs go and see it." If so, why not tomorrow morning? No; I must feast my eyes on it now; and, on the spot, say, "This is my estate." Thus, covetousness is called in Scripture, "the lust of the eye;" for "what good is there in riches," says the wise man, "but the beholding of them with our eyes?" The miser, therefore, loves to count his gold, to survey his fields, or his houses; for when the heart runs after property, the eye delights to rove over it. This takes some men far away from the preaching of the Gospel, to live in a fine house, or on a beautiful estate, remote from the best means of worshipping God, or enjoying his ordinances, till, wearied with inefficient instructors and heartless services, they fall into the total neglect of public worship; and thus the men of property are often the worst instructed for the soul and eternity. Well did our Saviour speak of the deceitfulness of riches, and exclaim, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." They have bought a piece of the land of this globe, and say in their hearts, what one profanely said aloud, "that he would give up his portion in Paradise, for his portion in Paris." Was this the fruit of the curse that smote the earth at the fall, that those who possess its landed estates should seldom have an inheritance in heaven; until the time come, when it shall be said, "there is no more curse, and the meek inherit the earth?"

The next reason given for refusing the invitation was,1

2. Business. "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and must go to prove them."

Those who are labouring to be rich often declaim severely against those who are rich, forgetting that business may be a snare as fatal as property. But Christ, in his word, deals impartially to all, and no more flatters the tradesman than the prince. This man had bought the oxen that were used in agricultural labour, and was too anxious to know whether he had made a good purchase, to be inclined to partake of the feast. Is this an ideal danger, or even a singular case? Are there none here who are, at this moment, thinking of yesterday's transactions in business, and so absorbed in them as to be deaf to the invitations of the Gospel? Is this a rare exception to the spirit of tradesmen? Is it not the ordinary consequence of the cares and gains of business, that

those whose souls are yet at stake, their salvation yet unsecured, are wandering after the cares of this life? When we say, "Repent, or you will perish;" they, in heart, reply, "Trade is dull;" and when we say, "Believe and be saved," they virtually answer, "We hope this new speculation will succeed;" when we cry, "Now is the accepted time," they are thinking of some happy moment for making great gain.

Thus, the farmer, the merchant, the tradesman swallows up the *Christian*; and to all that we can say of the one thing needful, they oppose this answer, "Business must be attended to; we have large property at stake; made great purchases; bought five yoke of oxen, and must go to prove them." But where this hindrance to salvation does not operate, there comes in,

3. Relationship: "I have married a wife, and cannot come."

This man's excuse has been pronounced worst of all and yet he answers most rudely; for there was a tone of politeness in begging to be excused, but this newly-married man gives neither apology nor reason. But who has not seen, that where marriage is a hindrance to the soul, it is the most powerful and fatal snare? He "that is married, careth for the things of the world, how he may please his wife." Yet he must have married a bad wife, or she would not have kept him away from the feast. A helpmate for him would have refused to be a hindrance. But who can describe the ruin brought on souls by ungodly marriages? These threw open the flood-gates of the deluge to the old world, and made an aged fool of him who in his youth was the wisest of men. By this excuse, however, our Lord designed, no doubt, to show how the bonds of kindred may operate to keep the heart from God. For if man once said to his Maker, "The woman that thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat;" how often have his sons said, "This beloved wife, this pleasant child, these friends of my bosom, who are as my own soul, would be alienated from me if $\hat{\mathbf{I}}$ gave myself up to religion!" The love of kindred, which is, next to love of God, the most innocent, holy, and even beneficial pleasure, is, by the perverting influence of sin, made the ruin of many amiable sinners.

Observe, that this, which was a pure affair of the heart, depending entirely upon the inclinations and affections, furnishes the plea of inability. "I cannot come," when it is manifest that this can not is merely will not. And be assured that this is the whole amount of our inability to obey the Gospel. It is, indeed, a real inability, as strong and as effectual as that which a blind man labours under with regard to sight; so that Christ justly said, "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him." But, then, how different from physical inability with regard to moral responsibility, guilt, and condemnation!

For who will say, that, because a confirmed drunkard cannot keep himself sober, he is therefore to be excused as innocent? This man, indeed, said, with truth, I cannot come; for no man can act against his prevailing inclination; but was there no guilt in preferring a wife to a God?

But, mark how all these excuses are derived from lawful things. Neither property, nor business, nor marriage, nor kindred, are, in themselves, sinful, so that it should be impossible for those who were thus circumstanced to partake of the feast to which heaven invites. But while some are ruined by gross vices, far more are kept from Christ and heaven, by things that we cannot charge with guilt, and for which men praise themselves as virtuous beings, diligent in business, and attentive to the claims of domestic life. But what will it avail us, that we are lost, not by gross vice, but by the minor virtues? For see how frivolous these excuses appear, as we read them in the parable; and learn how your own excuses will appear to you, when your eyes are opened by the spirit of conviction, or by the blaze of eternity, showing you all the murderous consequences to the soul.

Think, then, I entreat you, my friends, what report we must give, when asked what reception you gave to the invitation we are charged to bring. Nathan said to David, "Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me." "So the servants came and told their lord."

Must we not go and shortly appear before him that sent us? Shall we give our account with grief, that would be unprofitable for you, as well as unpleasant to us? Must we say, "All day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people?" We may, from love to you, rather reproach ourselves that we have not succeeded, and say, "It was because we were not more earnest and more faithful." But, if we have truly delivered our message, and thrown all our hearts into it, the Searcher of hearts will thrown all our hearts into it, the Searcher of hearts will acquit us of guilt. But, then, at what price? He will be angry with you. For who loves to see his kindness spurned? And what grace is equal to that which God shows in sending to you the glad tidings of salvation, by Christ, and intreating you to be reconciled to God? When you put off your salvation a little longer, that you may go on in the world, you think you are but where you were before. If you have not embraced Christ, you say you have not insulted and blasphemed him. Fatal delusion! As if God tendered to you his Son, to take him, or let him alone, as you pleased! No; if you prefer the gain of riches, or the pursuits of business, or the affections of the creature, to Christ's salvation and heaven's joys; think not that you have done no harm. Nothing is so terrible as abused love; nothing feeds the flames like oil. Ah, beware lest that word be said to you also, "Since you put away the Gospel from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." For we have now to see,

II. The last in invitation, first in acceptance: v. 21—24.

II. The last in invitation, first in acceptance: v. 21-24.

"My counsel shall stand, says Jehovah, and I will do all my pleasure; for I will work, and who shall let?" "My word shall not return to me void; but shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." When, therefore, those who were first bidden, refused to come, the lord of the feast sent forth his servants into the streets and lanes, and then into the highways and hedges; by which we are led to reflect on the first success of the Gospel, and on its ultimate triumphs.

1. The first success of the Gospel.

The principal part of the Jewish nation, those who lived at Jerusalem, and their leaders, the Scribes, and Pharisces, and priests, who prided themselves on having the precedence in privilege, having rejected Christ and his Apostles, so generally, that it was said, "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?" the invitation was sent to those of the same city, but who were what would be called the crowd, or the mob, and to the very paupers, the blind, the halt and maimed; such as lie about in streets, or lodged in lanes and alleys; such, in fact, as the high party would have scorned to sit down with at table. This was said, on purpose to show what it was that shocked the pride of the more respectable, as they would be called, of that generation to whom Christ was sent. For thus we read,—" Then drew near all the publicans and sinners for to hear him;" but the Scribes and Pharisees murmured, calling him "a friend of publicans and sinners."

Samaritans, men of half caste, those who were most hated and despised by such as gloried in saying, "I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews," and the dispersed among the Gentiles, who were considered as polluted by their residence in Heathen lands, and by speaking, not what was called Hebrew, but the Greek, a heathen tongue, formed a large part of the first churches of Christ. These were the "things that were despised, and things that were not, which God chose, to bring to nought the things which are; that no flesh might glory in his presence." Many such accepted the invitation, as it appears, because the servants say, "We have done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room;" intimating that many had come, though there were not enough to fill the tables.

But what a scene is here exhibited! What a company for a splendid feast! Paupers are taken out of the streets! The lame come halting in! The blind are feeling their way to the table! Was this company fit for a nobleman? Can he endure such a sight? Will these be thought worthy of the entertainment? If they were not, so neither were those that were first bidden. Much as they had despised the

entertainment, it was too good for them. And though these despised guests may shock our pride, they were fit subjects for the displays of that grace, which spread the table. "We are saved by grace, not by works, lest any man should boast." When Joshua, the high priest, was exhibited to Zechariah, first, clothed in filthy garments, and then adorned with change of raiment, Jehovah said, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" Such is the appearance which we make at the table of the Lord. There our unworthiness, and Christ's glorious grace, are the lights and shades which make a fine picture. The provisions on the board, and the Lord at the head of the table, are in striking contrast with the guests seated around; but these show "the exceeding riches of God's grace, in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus." They display, however, not merely the grace, but the power of our Lord, who makes us willing to receive the salvation which he has offered. For if the first who were invited, made their wealth, these might have made their poverty their excuse, and have said, "I am not fit to come to such an entertainment." But though the Lord suffered some to perish in their pride, he prevailed on others to come, notwithstanding all their meanness and shame. Let no man imagine that God is dependent on him. If we refuse, Christ shall have others who will accept. This table shall be filled with guests.

2. The final triumph of the Gospel.

The servants, jealous for their master's honour, were not satisfied with their success; for they said, "still there is room," and they wished to see it occupied. If we remind you of this, and assure you how anxious we are to see you fill up that room; say not, this is only the language of the servants. The master approved and sympathised with them in their solicitude to see the table filled with guests. Are we not, then, justified, in not being easily satisfied with our success? After exulting in the conversion of numbers to God, we insatiably go on coveting earnestly more, and still more, making our past success but a stimulus to further exertions. For, as long as there is merit in Christ's blood to wash away

sin, perfection in his righteousness to justify the ungodly, power in his Spirit to change hearts of stone to flesh, promises in his word to encourage all to come, and assurances that whosoever will, may come, does not the Spirit, and should not the bride, say, "Come?" Must not, then, the faithful messenger long to see the church, which is the House of God, filled with guests? When, therefore, the first churches, composed of the poor despised Jews and Samaritans were gathered, it was said to Christ, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles."

"Then go out, beyond the city and its streets and lanes, into highways, in the country among the hedges, and compel them to come in;" said the lord of the feast. But how compel them? By physical force and violence, says the church of Rome, and that terrible institution which, by a vile perversion of words, is called the holy inquisition. They have expounded this text by the light of fires, in which the martyrs of Jesus have gone up to heaven, a whole burnt offering. How justly has it been said, that persecution is as stupid as it is wicked! Will such an interpretation agree with the imagery of the text? Physical violence employed to bring men to a feast! Could that be an entertainment to which the guests were driven by force of blows, or fear of torments? And who were to compel them? The servants, or as we should say in modern language, the footmen of the nobleman. And could a few unarmed servants employ physical force on the multitude, whom they found in the highways? And why were these to be compelled? Because others had refused. Then, if compulsion of this gross kind were to be employed, why not resort to it on the first refusal, and compel a more respectable company to come in? But as the machinery of the parable overwhelms this perverted interpretation with confusion, so the religious design of the whole proves that no physical force could have been intended. For what is the feast? Salvation, which the Gospel provides. What is the hall of entertainment? The church of Christ. And what is it to come into the church?

To repent and be converted, to drop our alienation of heart, to believe on the Son of God, to give ourselves up to the love and service of God. Can this be effected by blows, and racks, and fines, and imprisonments, and cruel deaths? Are not these fitter to drive men from God than bring them to him; to increase their alienation, rather than reconcile an enemy? How, then, are we to compel them to come in? By moral force, such as Christ employed, when he is said to have compelled his disciples to go into a ship. Who ever conceived of Jesus employing blows and physical violence, because he is said to have compelled? Nay, the disciples themselves are said to have constrained Christ to remain with them at Emmaus; but what was the constraint? That of argument, and persuasion, saying, "Abide with us; for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent." Compel them, then, as you would a starving multitude to come to a feast, saying, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, let him come and buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Compel them, by not preaching before them, but to them; not merely teaching them, but persuading them; pressing on them the grace of the invitation, and the richness of the entertainment; urging them with entreaties and persuasions, so irresistibly kind, so tenderly compulsory, that they shall feel compelled to say, "Well, I must go; I cannot resist such entreaties any longer." Use no mere cold didactic statements, that fall like lumps of ice at their feet, heavy, frozen, rough, sharp, and repulsive: but urge them with invitations so kind, enforcing the thoughts that breathe with words that burn, and give so animated a representation of love divine, that the very rocks might listen, and the rushing cataracts arrest their course, and linger to catch the sounds which angels might come down to hear.

What language can do justice to the grace of the heavenly King, who, being independent and self-sufficient, has made such provision for bringing us into fellowship with himself! Had he been dependent on us for his own happiness, what could he have done more? What an entertainment is exhi-

bited in the supper of the Lord, where all the Gospel and all this parable are embodied! What importunity has he employed to vanquish our unreasonable, ungrateful, and ruinous reluctance!

Is it, then, concerning us, that this parable was spoken? The servants of the bounteous prince have come to us, charged with the urgent commission, to compel us, by the sweet constraint of love, to come in to the heavenly feast. Why, then, pass away with indifference, like the passengers by the hill of Calvary, while he hangs bleeding on the cross, and saying, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like to my sorrow?" Others stop and look at the banqueting hall, and, after gazing on the wellspread table, turn away, indifferent to the voice that says, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye." A third class come as far as the threshold, and there stop, looking, listening, hesitating, resolving to come, but never coming. Ah, what will such attendance on divine ordinances avail you? Did it suffice for the drowning inhabitants of the old world, to cling to the outside of the ark? Could it alleviate the pangs of the rich man in hell, to look up and see heaven afar off? Alas! to see a feast is but tantalizing to a hungry soul. Till you taste as well as see that the Lord is gracious, no approaches, however near, can make you safe, or blessed.

And if we succeed not, nor compel you to come in, will not all the kind constraints we are commanded to use, haunt you with terrific recollections? The thought of this sometimes makes us afraid to do our duty, lest it should turn to your condemnation. Did not Jesus, that prince of preachers, that miracle of grace, weep over his hearers, when he thought how the glories of his ministry would aggravate their woe? Ah, how will you bear to think, in a world of misery, of the forms of kindness that heaven once put on, and the tender entreaties that its servants once employed! "I remember," will be said by some, "how I once wondered at their importunity! One would have thought they were begging for their own life, instead of mine; and that their own salvation or perdition depended on my believing in Christ; that the

preacher would be damned, if his hearers were not saved. They seemed as if they would fall at my feet, and embrace my knees, and with their tears, as well as words, woo me to accept my own salvation. Well; they have delivered their own souls. I have nothing to lay to their charge. Bear witness, O hell, and all thy dreary guests, that I come down among you, with all my blood on my own head!" Why, then, will you tempt such horrors, and still refuse to come? Is it because you cannot bring the world with you, but the door of life is too narrow to admit more than your own soul, so that you must renounce all for Christ? And why should you wish to bring the world with you? Is it so pleasant a companion? Is it not cursed with thorns and briars? Is it not full of vanity and vexation of spirit? Is not every one that is courting it still complaining of it, as a deceiver, a traitor, a masked assassin? To all that is innocent, and useful, and conducive to real happiness, religion is no enemy; but the present life is enjoyed with higher relish and greater security, in the church of God, than in the desert of sin. For our heavenly Father, like a wise and pious earthly parent, is so far from being opposed to the real happiness of his children, that he loves to see and promote it. Their genuine friends he welcomes to his house, and frowns on none but those who, under the mask of friendship, hide a hostile, deadly mind. Come, then, for all things are ready. Enter and feast with the king. Dread, above all things, the thunder of that sentence, "None of those men that were bidden and have refused, shall taste of my supper."

To you, my friends, who are servants to the heavenly King, is here given a lesson of inestimable worth, teaching you the benevolent solicitude you should feel for those who are without. With your own share in the prince's favour, and your place at his table, and your enjoyment of the feast, you must not be content; but must cherish the most earnest desire to see the table filled with guests. By the kind compulsion of convincing arguments, and the force of irresistible persuasion, you should bring others to share your bliss, an your Saviour's grace.

LECTURE XXV.

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

LUKE XV.

HE that knows our frame has adopted the principle of reiterated inculcation of truth, giving "line upon line, and precept upon precept," that the sentiments necessary to our salvation may at length produce their due impression on our hearts. Three distinct parables are here employed to teach one grand lesson. For when Jesus saw that the concourse of publicans around his pulpit made the great pretenders to righteousness murmur at him, for paying that attention to sinners which was due only to the just, he defended himself by a threefold appeal to their judgment and conscience.

"Which of you," he says, "having a hundred sheep, if one of them go astray, like these sinners, would not turn off his attention from the other ninety-nine, to go after that single one?" And would he not take more delight in recovering that stray sheep, than in the quiet possession of all the rest that never wandered? And would he not expect his friends to share in his joy? Can you, then, be the friends of God and righteousness, if, instead of this, you murmur?

And as perhaps there were females among these pharisaic cavillers, Jesus said, "What poor woman who had ten drachmas,* or sixpences, constituting all her little store, would not, if she happened to drop one of them, bestow more thought and pains on its recovery, than on all the other nine? If she found it, would she not rejoice over it, more than over what she never lost; and would she not call her female friends to share in her joy? Why, then, do you not exult to see me recover lost souls, more precious than silver or gold?"

^{*} About six shillings and threepence.

So natural is it for a real friend to sympathise with us when we repair a severe loss, that holy angels in heaven show their love to God and righteousness, by rejoicing more over one sinner that turns by repentance from a course of sin, than over ninety and nine, who having long lived justly, have no need of "repentance from dead works." But as what is quickly learned may be soon forgotten, these two shorter appeals to the judgment were followed by a larger parable, which more powerfully addressed the imagination and the heart. This incomparable story of the prodigal son contains three classes of ideas, which may be denominated—apostacy—repentance—reconciliation.

I. Apostacy is exhibited in the former part of the narrative: v. 11-16.

As all apostacy has what the logicians call two terms, or bounds, that *from* which, and that *to* which, we go; we must here mark, from what heights, and to what depths the prodigal fell.

1. From what heights of honour and happiness.

The situation of children at home, under a father, who is at once wealthy and kind, is employed to exhibit the state of man under the government of that God whose name is love, and who is "Lord of all." But this, to a depraved disposition, appears a hard restraint, a degrading pupilage; and no tongue can describe the restless discontent that is often felt by him that should have been held in peaceful calm, or grateful delight. In the Eden of bliss, where our first parents were at home, an envious apostate spirit contrived to sow discord, by asking, "Has God said ye shall not eat of every tree?" Are you under such restraints? Should any knowledge be withheld from you? Why should ye not be as Gods? Spurn the bonds, and set up for yourselves.

The younger son was he that felt this restless spirit, which prompted the unceremonious demand, "Father, give me the portion of goods which falleth to me." In youth we are peculiarly liable to attacks of this fever of the soul. Oh, my young friends, and ye, especially, who are children of the righteous, whenever you begin to feel your father's house a

prison; as soon as his presence is to you a restraint; when you burn to substitute your own will for his authority; then take alarm, and fly from the threatening danger, as if you felt the commencement of an earthquake, or saw the flames bursting from a terrific volcano. Send the shriek of alarm up to him who can equally quench a burning mountain, or a mental fever; can turn the course of a river, or the current of the blood. Say to him, "Speak peace to this troubled spirit, as thou once didst to a stormy sea. Hush the tumult of my passions, and make me own that to be ruled by God, who is reason, is true liberty; to serve thee is to reign. Then shall I say with thy prophet, 'My heart is not haughty, nor do I occupy myself in things too high for me: my soul is like a weaned child."

But this restless spirit, having asked, or rather demanded, the father, whether rightly or not our Saviour does not say, consented; and a division of property being made, that portion which fell to the younger son was delivered into his own hands. "Delicious moment!" exclaims the infatuated youth. "Now I am my own master, and have my fortune at my command." Ah! how short a time will suffice to show, that for the father to have it at his control, was the only way for the son to have it for his use; and when the youth has all at once, he is soon left with nothing. So, when, at creation, man had his fortune in his own hands, he quickly squandered all, and left his whole race bankrupt. Happily for us, we have now "a new and better covenant," for it has pleased the Father, "that in Christ all fulness should dwell;" and while we, out of his fulness, receive grace in time of need, we are completely and for ever rich.

The young man, having obtained his object, not many days after (no, time seemed to linger on his march, and it appeared an age till) "he gathered all together, and went off into a far country." Did our Lord hint that the youth designed to trade as a merchant, in foreign lands, to increase his paternal inheritance? If so, what a picture of irresolution and disappointment did he present! The golden dreams of the thrifty merchant end in the extravagance of the

spendthrift, who consumes the last farthing on his lusts. Poverty, wretchedness, and shame are the natural offspring of inexperience married to self-will. But, perhaps, nothing more is intended than eagerness to get away from his parent's eye, in order to spend his fortune where no one knew him, and where strangers would think him "some great one." There he hopes to extract from his portion such honours and such pleasures as his father's beggarly prudence would not procure. But the aspiring youth descends into the dust; and the new friends made in foreign lands show the wisdom of the inspired counsel, "Thine own friends, and thy father's friends, forsake not."

2. To what depths he fell.

These were depths of iniquity, for he wasted his substance in riotous living; and of misery, for he spent all and came to want.

See him spending his fortune in the abyss of vice. To the voice from heaven, which says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," men bow respectfully and say, "We do not; it is for our children." If this were all true, is it real kindness to our children? Is it not a refinement of cruelty, to give them nothing to do but to spend? Depraved as human nature is, what religion is the rich heir likely to follow, but the worship of the world's trinity, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life?" Who can wonder, then, that we find this youth spending his substance in riotous living! To such extent some carry this prodigality, that they are in a perpetual whirl; and their own heads being giddy, the whole world seems to turn round with them. They fancy that human life is intended for nothing but visits and parties, dressing and display, giving and receiving entertainments, feasting, and music, and dancing, contriving pleasures, and trying to taste them. One of these prodigals once owned, that, for several years, he was never perfectly sober. Thus, a double intoxication, of body and mind, precludes all rational consideration of their course, or anticipation of their end.

When, in the latter part of the parable, the elder brother

accuses the prodigal of consuming his fortune upon harlots, it is hinted that this sin is a common ingredient in the cup of guilty pleasure. Instead of the friendship of the fairest and most amiable of their sex, and the honourable marriage to which religion invites; the infatuated sinner turns to the most degraded, infamous, and loathsome of women, by whom the mind is debauched and ripened for hell, while the body is prostituted and hurried to the grave.

This riotious living they call pleasure! And, for this, they reduce themselves to rags! To live continually in such a state of feverish excitement, that, if Providence had thus afflicted them, they would fly to a physician! So to turn night into day, that the splendid rake and the poor watchman are in the streets together, at the same chilling, gloomy hour! To doom themselves to such exertions of body and mind, that few would go through, to gain a fortune, what they endure to spend one! If this is pleasure, then, pain, thou shalt be my bliss! Call this liberty! Oh come, religion, and bind me round with thy straitest bonds, that I may never be free to work my own ruin and woe!

The depths of misery to which the prodigal was reduced, are painted with a master's hand, in few strokes. "When he had spent all." "When could that be?" exclaims the unfledged prodigal. "He has many thousands a year." But some of us have seen splendid fortunes vanish as a mountain of snow. The mass of property has been such as to create a national talk, and to make it perfectly confounding, to think how soon the journals of the day announced, that all was, at last, too little to satisfy the creditor.

But, "when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land." Commerce now supplies our wants, when agriculture fails; but here the allusion is, to countries which depended entirely on their own productions; so that the vicissitudes of the seasons often produced famines. Those who are intent only on spending and enjoying, in sunshine, and harvest, and plenty; little think how soon days of darkness, and dearth, and winter, may arrive, and how ill prepared a ruined, pampered spendthrift is, to struggle with want.

My younger hearers will say, "Surely some of those whom this thoughtless youth has treated so generously as to spend all his fortune upon them, will relieve him, now that he is in distress." Not they, indeed. Prodigality and selfishness walk hand in hand. It is religion that prompts to generous benevolence. The rake spent his fortune upon himself, not upon his friends. It was not because he loved them, but because he could not do without company, that he invited them to his board. They know it; and, with the same spirit, turn away to those who are not in want. These swallow-like friends, who had fluttered around him in the summer of prosperity, no sooner felt the frosty air of winterish poverty, than they flew off to other lands where plenty reigns.

He, therefore, who had no money and no friends, must go to seek a master, and submit to work. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country." But such was the famine, and so hard was it to get employment, that he was compelled to submit to be sent into the fields, to feedwhat? Sheep? No; that would have been an honourable employment, in which he might have resembled Moses, or David. He was "sent to feed swine." This, to an audience of Jews, must have sounded most degrading. Swine were, to them, most detestable animals, forbidden to be eaten, on account of their filthy nature; and no employment to which a miserable wretch among us could be reduced, is considered so vile as that of a swine-herd. But, even by this loathsome toil, he could not live; for famine gives scanty wages. Gnawed by hunger, he looked with envy upon the very swine he fed, and "would fain have filled his belly with the husks* that they ate." But, either their food was such that he could not digest, or in a time of famine, he was forbidden to pick a morsel from their trough, and so he was doomed to see swine fed while he himself starved.

^{*} Much has been said of the meaning of the Greek word. It has been translated Carobs, or St. John's bread. But to a mere English reader, such things as acorns, or bean-shells, or grains, would best convey the idea intended. Martini renders it ghiande, acorns; and Diodati, silique, shells; following the Syriac.

And "no man gave unto him." What! not for his good father's sake? Oh! you forget that he was removed into a far country, where his father was not known; and, for his own sake, who would give him anything? The companion of his riots, or routs, felt, perhaps, the pressure of the famine, and prudent people had been disgusted by his prodigality, lust, and pride.

Now let your minds'-eye flash from scene to scene, from one extreme to the other, of these striking contrasts. Look at him, first, at home. "Ah, sweet home!" he would now exclaim, "where all was kindly provided, and wisely husbanded, by a father's affectionate heart, and watchful eye." Next, see him quit home, in proud style, flushed with intoxicating schemes, setting up a splendid establishment, surrounded with lewd companions, in a perpetual fever of wine and lust, struggling to dissipate the fortune his father's care had reared, and to accelerate that poverty which he is becoming every moment less fit to meet. Behold, at last, the tenderly educated youth, the lofty squire, in rags; shivering with cold, feeding the swine, longing for their food, no man deigning to give him a pitying look, or throw him a mite, to save him from death. These, alas! are no imaginary scenes. This is all real life. Could we not show one, who erst sat in this assembly, as delicately attired as any here, every day sitting down to a board of plenty; but, bursting all parental restraint, and rushing into paths of sin, he is now reduced to such a plight, that you would shrink at his approach, afraid of his touch, and with a mixture of horror and pity, would exclaim, "Is this he? Ah, how changed!" These, O sin, are thy miracles! As, when our first parents walked with God in Paradise, under duty's easy yoke, tempted to be as gods, they opened their eyes, only to see themselves naked and ruined, to shudder at the sound of a Father's voice, to fice from the Omnipresent, and hide themselves from the Omniscient.

II. Repentance gives name to the next class of ideas: v. 16-19.

Here the divine preacher presents to our notice the youth's waking, his reflections, and his resolution.

1. The waking. "When he came to himself."

What, then, had he been beside himself? Is it thus our Lord flings back upon sin the reproach of madness, and gives to religion, which is charged with putting men beside themselves, the honour of bringing them to themselves? Nebuchadnezzar says, "I lifted up my eyes, and my understanding returned to me," but it was to find himself among beasts. The prodigal opened his eyes, to see himself ruined, his fortune spent, his friends fled, himself in a far country, in rags, hungry and wretched, feeding swine. So, when the sinner comes to himself, he sees a soul ruined, depraved, guilty, exposed to the wrath to come; and this is all that is left of the dreams of the gay libertine. Yet, however mortifying, it is safe, it is necessary, it is in the end blessed, to recover from the maddening delirium of a fever, or the death-like insensibility of a fainting fit. We long to see the giddy, intoxicated look, exchanged for the stare of surprise and horror, on waking up to see the soul robbed, wounded, naked, on the edge of the burning lake, exclaiming, "What shall I do to be saved?"

It was by coming to want that this youth came to himself. "I will take away my corn," saith Jehovah, "and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart."

"Abundance and religion never could agree; Religion always sides with poverty."

HERBERT.

Unwise parents supply wicked children with plenty of money, when God has taught us that poverty is their best preceptor, the only one from which fools will learn wisdom. We have little hope of the recovery of certain apostates, unless it should please God to lay his hand on their body, to throw them on a bed of sickness, or on their fortune, to bring them to want.

2. The reflections of the prodigal were these: "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, while I perish with hunger."

Cherish, my young friends, reflections on the happiness of

holiness, and the misery of iniquity. They are the rising beam of hope. It is a good hour, when he who once ridiculed his parents' strictness, begins to say, What a wise and happy man was my father! What a lovely, heavenly woman was my mother! My father's house! Oh! it was the abode of order, heaven's first law. There was plenty without waste, and frugality without want. There religion shed a peaceful light; and the morning and evening sacrifice was cheered with sacred song, which oft compelled the foot of the passenger to linger, that he might listen, as he passed our door.

"I have been there, and still would go,
"Tis like a little heaven below."

The prodigal can now say, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare. Once, not content to be a son under that roof, I should now be glad to be a servant; for my father's servants are princes, compared with his prodigal son. They have enough; for what I once censured as niggardliness, was a wise liberality. They have bread to spare. Out of their honourable wages, or from what my father allows them to give, they could now relieve the poor forlorn creature they once called their young master."

When a man contrasts the happiness of the pious with his own misery, and sets himself down beneath the meanest of God's servants, we may conclude that his heart is broken; and "before honour is humility."

"But I perish here with hunger," says the prodigal. "Misery has claimed me for her own; anguish gnaws upon the core of my heart; and death, in the most horrid form, that of starvation, stares me in the face." Such is the scene exhibited, when the mask is plucked from that impostor, sin, and heaven asks, in thunders, "What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death."

3. The resolution is formed at last. "I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, I have sinned."

But, think not that he came to this without a struggle.

No; before he *spake* thus, he *thought* far different things. "What if I should be obliged to go back to my father? Go back! In this plight? I will perish first. Never will I stoop to be pitied and to be taunted by my elder brother! Let me rather die, like a man of spirit, than live degraded."

But, ah! to die is not so easy an affair! and to die of hunger, is to die by inches. He comes, therefore, to second thoughts. "Am I not already degraded? To feed swine! Can I sink lower than this? Then, why talk of keeping up my pride, and not submitting to be pitied, when I should, at this moment, be glad of any one's pity?"

my pride, and not submitting to be pitied, when I should, at this moment, be glad of any one's pity?"

"I will arise." "Yes; to return to my father, is to rise; it is springing up on the wings of hope, to honour and to bliss again. I will go. Were it over mountains, or seas; to climb rocks, or struggle through swamps; it were better than to die here. I will go to my father; for I have yet a father, though I have robbed him of a son."

"But what shall I say for myself when I go?" "Thy son has taken a long journey, from a far country, to see thee?" "Ridiculous!" you exclaim. "That would be insulting to the father, and a proof that the returned child was no penitent." True. Then, why make a merit of the pains you have taken to seek the heavenly Father's face? Why plead your journeys to his house, the prayers offered, and the tears shed to obtain his favour?

But God has said, "Take with you words, and return to the Lord." He has "filled our mouth with arguments," and these are some of them: "Father, I have sinned." "Father!" That word contains ten thousand arguments. It is the spring of hope. There is something paternal in the character of God. Something!—I beg his forgiveness—there is every thing—all the Father. For who gave to any of us a parent's heart? Was it not the Father of our spirits? And is there not all, and more than all, in the fountain that there ever was in the streams! Rise, guilty and desponding creature! Say not to God, "Despot! tyrant!" but "Father!—Father of mercies!" With this just address to God, he joins a good confession,—"I have sinned." This

was frank; this was honest; this was true; this is what we should re-echo—"I have sinned." "Against heaven, and before thee." My earthly and my heavenly parent I have insulted; for he that violates the fifth command, flings away the promise which the parent Spirit has annexed to it. Instead, therefore, of claiming any thing on the score of kindred, the son owns that he has forfeited all claim to be called a son. "Then make me as one of thy hired servants." This is repentance! To renounce all claim on God; to say nothing of ourselves, but "I have sinned, I am unworthy. The lowest place among the servants of God would be an undeserved favour." Now, see what follows.

III. Reconciliation.

"The son arose and went;" for where repentance, which is a genuine change of mind, leads, conversion, which is a change of life, will follow.

1. The private reconciliation between the father and the son preceded.

"Yet a great way off the father saw his child, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." Here, it has been well observed, all is mercy; the eye of mercy saw him; the bowels of mercy yearned towards him; the feet of mercy ran to meet him; the arms of mercy embraced him; and the lips of mercy kissed him.

But how came those eyes to see the child, while yet a great way off? Were they looking that way? Oh yes; ever since the son went into that far country, many a time the father stood and looked towards the hills where last he saw the form of his son diminish and die away in the distant horizon. Often he said, with a sigh, "Oh, that I could see my poor child return, that—But there he is! Surely that is he!" For though he is not yet come near, a parent's eye can see far towards a child.

Now, all the father yearns within, and the bowels of compassion are troubled at the picture of misery. Ah, that tattered dress! that way-worn limping step! that emaciated figure! that pale and sorrowful countenance! "Is Ephraim my dear son? says Jehovah; since I spake against him, I do

earnestly remember him still; my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy on him."

He ran to meet him; for the father could not coldly wait for the arrival of the prodigal at the door. Thus our heavenly Father meets us more than half way. For as he first gives us the spirit of repentance, so he anticipates its march, every step of the way, till it conducts us to our father's house. Does he not meet us more than half way, when he throws in our path some pious friend to help our progress, or causes some promise in his word to strike our eye, or by an encouraging event of providence animates us to press forward?

The father fell on the neck of his child, and embraced him, though he had come from feeding swine. But what will not parental tenderness do? Especially, what will not the compassion of the Father of mercies do, for sinners that return to him, "with weeping and supplication?" He receives them into the embrace of the everlasting arms; and the poor trembling criminal, who almost thought it presumptuous to say, "Perhaps he will not spurn me from his feet," finds himself locked in the arms of eternal love.

The father of the prodigal kissed his son, with what the Hebrews call "the kiss of peace," that says, "My child, I forgive thee all; make thyself sure of thy father's heart, as well as of his house and home." This is even surpassed by the conduct of God towards those who return to him through Christ. Frequently they receive that pledge of affection, "the love of God shed abroad in the heart."

All this was done before the prodigal could make his confession or request: "the God of my mercy shall prevent," or anticipate "me," says the psalmist. What effect had this on the returning child? Did he say, "There is now no occasion to confess my fault and present any degrading petition?" That is not the temper of the broken heart. Repentance is never so genuine, so cordial, so humbling, so melting, as when we have begun to taste mercy.

But it may be observed, that only a part of the speech prepared is uttered; yet that part was so considerable, that we may conclude the rest was suppressed, because the father stopped the child's mouth with the kiss of reconciliation. The prodigal said, "I am not worthy to be called thy son;" but the parent would hear nothing about making him a hired servant.

Now follows,

2. The public recognition.

"The father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry:" v. 22—24. Every part of this narrative alludes to the customs of the east, where they clothed, as well as fed their guests. The command was given, "Bring forth that robe, that best one (as we might translate the original) and put it on him; do not merely offer it to him, but cover his rags at once from my sight."

The ring that was put on the son's finger was a sign of rank. It was a badge of Roman knighthood; as the star is of modern knighthood. The prodigal was restored to the rank of a son.

The command to put shoes on his feet refers, not merely to one who had been travelling barefooted; but to the fine embroidered shoes, which were an article of dress, emphatically so called, and were destined to honour the son, when sitting down at his father's board, or reclining on his couch.

"Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat," sounds oddly to us; but in hot countries, where animal food was not much used, and where it would not keep long, it was common to reserve one beast always ready for the knife, to furnish an entertainment for distinguished guests that might happen to arrive. This, therefore, must be killed for him who so lately "would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat."

"Let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead."

In the school of Pythagoras, if any one departed from the rule of virtue, they produced a coffin, and mourned for him

as one dead. According to this custom, in how many houses would a coffin be a piece of furniture; and how many parents would march in funeral procession, dropping the tear, and exclaiming, "Alas, my son! my son! Dead to God, dead to hope, dead to me!" How many churches might exhibit a vast pile of coffins for numerous sons and daughters of the righteous, dead to religion and to the chosen race!

But, "he is alive again," exclaims the glad father. The widow of Nain did not see her son rise at the touch of Jesus with more extacy, than we behold our children open their eyes to religion. "This, my child, was lost and is found." Parents, if you have ever known what it is to lose your little one, before he could tell his name, or his abode, or find his way home again; if you have ever heard your messenger exclaim, "we have found him;" you may form some conception of the pangs and raptures of the Christian who saw his son, first wander from the way of truth, and then return to God. But, by whom was this picture drawn? By Jesus Christ. For what purpose? To teach us that such a Father is God. He who was in the bosom of the Father, came to tell us, that, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

The application of this parable, to the purpose for which it was given, is seen in the behaviour of the elder brother. For "when he drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing; and, being informed of the cause, he was angry, and would not go in." The Jews, assuming the airs of an elder brother, were angry with the Saviour for receiving publicans and sinners. Self-righteous pride exclaims, "Lo these many years do I serve thee, and never at any time transgressed thy commandments." Yet the Father had said, "Eat and be merry; for this my child is found," and the "elder son is angry and will not go in." Pharisaic boasts are as false in fact as they are proud and wicked in spirit.

"Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends;" is an echo to that for which God, by Isaiah, reproaches the Jews. "Wherefore have we fasted," say they, "and thou takest no knowledge?" But is this

piety; to reproach our Maker with our services and his niggardly rewards? We blush to hear the insolent youth say, "This thy son!" a servant had taught him better, exclaiming, "Thy brother is come." "He has wasted thy living with harlots," exclaims the proud youth. How did he know that? Not by "the charity that thinketh no evil." But to fling the son's crimes in the face of the father, and reproach him for his mercy to a returning child! Is this like one who "never at any time offended?"

Yet the father had meekly come out to entreat him that was so "angry that he would not go in." Benevolence is true greatness. It stoops to expostulate where it might reproach, or revenge. "It is meet that we should," or as Luther says, "that you should be merry; for this, your brother, was dead and is alive." Thus delicately Jesus reproves those who blamed his tenderness to publicans and sinners. Our creed is condemned, as licentious, because we maintain the free, instant, complete justification of the chief of sinners who believes in Jesus. Let us not wonder, or repine. God himself is censured for his mercy. We think it "is meet that we should rejoice" in it; they say, it gives encouragement to vice. The repentant prodigal asks, "What, then, must I say, with Ephraim, 'There is no hope; no; I have loved idols, and after them I must go?"" Should we promote the interests of virtue, by shutting the door against repentance and the returning sinner? No, no; though the world murmur; though hell envy; "it is meet that the church should be glad;" and all heaven rejoices with her; for "there is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

LECTURE XXVI.

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

LUKE xvi. 1.

When we hear him to whom the inspiration of the Almighty "gave wisdom above all the sons of men," say, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," the sentence strikes us as one of the words of the wise, which are as goads, to pierce and stimulate the mind, and as nails fastened in a sure place, never to be forgotten, while memory holds her seat. For what a host of considerations compel us to prefer, in our most serious moments, any righteous man, however simple and unlearned, however poor and despised, however afflicted and oppressed, to any one of his wicked neighbours, though wise as the philosophers of this world, rich as Crœsus, or mighty as those who have been hailed king of kings? Is it not natural, then, that I should feel some hesitation to appear to reverse this sentence, and to exalt his neighbour above the righteous? Yet, when I repeat my text, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light;" must I not feel as Moses, when he said to Israel, "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you?" But as it cannot be pleasant to you to be disparaged, and set down below the men of the world, allow me to remind you, that this unusual sentiment was uttered by your Redeemer's lips, and that "faithful are the wounds of a friend, while the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." "Let the righteous smite me," says the psalmist, "it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent perfume, not to break, but cheer my head."

See, then, the maxim of the text illustrated by an example, and enforced by grave reasons.

I. The truth illustrated by an example, that of the unjust steward.

For this is the conclusion of one of Christ's most striking parables. My audience will readily see how appropriate it is to our condition, when we observe, that it speaks of a steward; of one who was about to give up his accounts, and of one who provided in his present situation for his future welfare.

1. This was the steward of a rich lord.

Every thing that this agent for the landed proprietor saw around him was not his own, but another's. The habit of controlling every thing might insensibly induce a deceptive feeling, as if he were the proprietor; and the necessity which others felt of looking up to him who managed the property, as to their master, might cause them to flatter him as the owner of all; but if he gave way to these illusions, he strangely forgot and deceived himself. Let us, then, promptly and faithfully apply this to ourselves. We are not lords of any thing we are said to possess. We are but servants; not menials, indeed, but confidential servants, stewards, placed in posts of trust, and therefore of honour, and in the way to promotion; that, if faithful, we may be enriched with generous rewards. All creatures are God's servants. Birds, beasts, and fishes, reptiles and plants, rocks and clouds, obey the orders of their Maker's throne; but it is the honour of man, and in this he is a partner with angels, to be a steward for God, to manage the other creatures, and direct them to his service and his praise. If you look down on the worm at your feet, and bless God that you are not that reptile, fail not to say, "but then, if so much more exalted, how much more responsible! If I am unfaithful to my trust, I shall one day wish I had been a worm or a toad, a plant or a stone."

Our responsibility is so incontrovertible, that nothing is more common than the confession, "we are but stewards." Yet I fear that the sentiment is but like one of the feathers that float in the air; that it hovers on our lips, because it has

not with us sufficient weight to sink down into the heart. This confession is usually applied to our property, and happy would it be, if the rich made a real practical application of the truth; for it would save us from the sin of hoarding, or rather burying, our lord's money by covetousness; and from the guilt of squandering upon "the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which are not of the Father, but of the world." But are we not stewards of life itself, and therefore of time, the raw material out of which life is spun? Are we not wasting our lord's goods, if we are loitering away our moments by needless sleep and relaxation, or by waking dreams? Consider also that singular nature which God has intrusted to your care—that body by which you are a part of the material world, and that soul which holds alliance with the intelligences of heaven, and with God the parent mind. What a tremendous charge, to be accountable for our understanding, with all its capabilities; our imagination, with its creative powers; our memory, with all the stores it may accumulate; our speech, with its faculty of conviction and persuasion: our eyes, our ears, our hands, our feet, every portion of ourselves, are but parts of the estate of which we are stewards. What a trust is our influence over others, and what a revenue may be gathered from it for our Lord! Our corporeal frame is justly said to be so curiously and wondrously formed, that if we saw all the delicacy of the machinery, we should be afraid to move. But how much more should we tremble at ourselves, if we saw all the extent of our own accountability!

2. This steward was about to be called to account.

Accused of wasting his lord's goods, he received the summons, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." We, however, know that we were originally designed to retire from our present post of trust, at no very distant period, and to enter on a state of retribution. Should we not, therefore, every day live expecting to hear the imperative mandate, "Give an account of thy stewardship?" Then time, that precious trust, shall be with us "no longer;" then the money we did not bring with us into this

world, we shall not carry out, but shall drop it, and other hands shall take it up, and with it the attendant responsibility; then life itself, with this soul, which we call our own, we must resign "to God who gave it." Not, however, that we are sure of retaining the trust we now hold, as long as life shall last. Sickness may deprive us of the use of our limbs; and we may lie as a helpless paralytic, a burthen to ourselves and our friends. Our mental powers too may be taken away, and we may be scarcely able to recognise our own children, or recollect our own name. By strange reverses, may "riches take to themselves wings and fly away, like an eagle towards heaven;" and by these means, and even without them, our influence in human affairs may be recalled, long before life itself.

But, sooner or later, by piecemeal or all at once, we must surrender the trust estate into the hands of its lord. What thunders then will attend that word, "Give account of thy stewardship!" How full of terrors would be a charge of waste! Some flatter themselves that they are in no danger of this, because they have done no harm. But in an office instituted for active usefulness, a negative character may be positively criminal. If a steward left his lord's fields uncultivated, so that they yielded no revenue, would it be enough for him to say, "I did not actually make them desolate?" If the stream that should have turned the mill run to waste, would it suffice to say, "I did not cut a channel to turn the waters in a pernicious course?" If time be squandered shall we not be reproved by the example of such a book as Watts's "Remnants of Time Improved?" Some think they are far enough from wasting their money, because they are hoarding it. But for whom are they hoarding? For their lord, or for themselves, or their children, their second selves? Has not God charged us not to lay up for ourselves treasures upon earth, but to do good while it is in the power of our hand? "Give a portion to seven, and even to eight." To live in the recollection of our accountability, and in the anticipation of the final reckoning, is the highest wisdom. For when the Apostle charges Christians to consider their pastors, as

men watching for souls in expectation of the final account, does he not tacitly remind us all, that we must shortly answer to God for every trust committed to us? Your souls are, indeed, our most precious charge; and woe to the man who does not tremble at such a trust! But have we not all been intrusted with the Gospel, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that most invaluable testimony, "that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life?" And what can be conceived more important? Is it not of infinite moment, that we should be able to give a good account of the use we have made of this choicest communication from the eternal mind? Had heaven intrusted you with the secret of making diamonds, what is this to the secret of salvation?

3. This steward provided for his future welfare.

Instead of turning a deaf ear to the warning given him, he said, "What shall I do?" He is represented as an easy negligent man, who wasted rather than embezzled his lord's goods, and who had made no private purse for himself. He, therefore, was obliged to think of labour; and as the Jews were an agricultural, rather than a commercial or manufacturing, people, he first thought of digging the soil. But from this again he shrunk, feeling that he was not strong enough for such toil. What, then, shall I do? If I cannot dig, I must beg. But from this his pride revolted, saying, "I am ashamed."

Now, in this prudent forethought he is made our example. How is it, then, that we do not, when we hear the warnings of providence and scripture, say, "I must soon give up my accounts, and what shall I do, when I am put out of my stewardship?" Why do we not wisely weigh things, and contemplate the alternative, not to dig or to beg, but to be saved or be lost? This man, though before thoughtless and improvident, was roused by the warning to think of the worst, and prepare for the best. If he shrunk from digging or begging, being too proud for this, and too weak for that, have we thought of something still worse than either? Have we said, What shall I do when called away from earth? How shall I find myself some millions of years hence? Can I anticipate

an entrance into the divine presence, to find myself where nothing that is defiled can ever enter, in the full blaze of the spotless One, in the society of just spirits made perfect, in the perpetual services of the heavenly temple? Or do I shrink from this, as what I cannot expect, because I am not fit for it, and could not enjoy it? Then am I prepared for the alternative? If we could not enjoy heaven, could we endure hell? If the former is too holy for us, is not the latter too severe? If found unfaithful, will not the same self-indulgence that caused us to waste our lord's goods on the gratification of our desires, render us utterly unfit to buffet the eternal storm? Can we pretend to be armed with triple brass, and prepared for a conflict with eternal justice? "Can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, when I shall deal with thee?" says God. To be driven to the left hand of the judge; to stand confounded; to hear the sentence, " Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" to be expelled, abhorred, abandoned, outlawed, without pity and without hope, is so much more dreadful than to dig or to starve, that this unjust steward will put us to shame, if we do not learn of him to say in time, "What shall I do?"

The steward is, therefore, represented as saying, "I know,* that is, I have determined, what to do;" and then, speaking as if he had in his eye those whom he intended to bribe with his lord's property, he adds, "That when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses;" intending to live upon his friends, and to avail himself of the utmost extent of Eastern hospitality, by going from house to house, as long as he lived. For this careless, improvident man, was roused by the summons he had received, to make preparation for a future day. Having, therefore, called together those who lived upon his lord's estate, he inquired into the revenues they were to yield; and, alluding to a custom that prevailed in the East,† one is represented as bound to furnish annually, oil for the household of the

^{* &}quot;E $\gamma\nu\omega\nu$. This use of the word know, in the sense of determine, is found in other parts of the New Testament, as well as in the Classics.

[†] Solomon's household was thus served. 1 Kings iv. 22, 23, 27, 28.

prince, to the amount of a hundred measures;* and another, wheat, to the extent of a hundred bushels. The steward allowed one to set down his quota at fifty, and another his at eighty, so that, in future, they would have to pay only so much; and thus, while he was received into their houses, and was living upon their hospitality, they would be indebted to him for the easy circumstances that enabled them to entertain him.†

But when it is said, "The Lord commended the unjust steward," most readers feel surprised and embarrassed. Sceptics and infidels, ancient and modern, have reviled Christ for commending dishonesty. Some say it is not our Lord Jesus, but the lord of the steward that is intended. This, however, the most ancient version, the Syriac, rejects, rendering the text thus: "Our Lord commended." But, whether you apply it to the one or other, nothing but ironical praise was intended; as if we should say, "Well done, he is become prudent at last; he that let every thing run to waste, is now looking out in time for good quarters;" so that when it shall be asked, how these friends became willing to receive him into their houses, the reply will be, "Oh, he was a wise man, and made himself friends while he had it in his power." It is this care for futurity that is commended; and when he is called an unjust steward, he is, for this, condemned, as also in v. 10, 11, 12: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least. is unjust also in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if we have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" From this example of worldly wisdom, in an unjust steward, our Lord takes occasion to utter the sentence which follows: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

^{*} A bath was equal to about seven and a half gallons, and a homer to seventy-five and a half.

[†] Sacy translates the passage thus: "Take back thy bill for a hundred, and sit down, write immediately another for fifty."

II. Hear this truth enforced by the most solemn considerations.

If comparisons are proverbially odious, this cannot be a favourite in the place where I stand; for it gives away the palm from those to whom we have been accustomed to adjudge it, and, what is more difficult to endure, seems to award it to those who are, on the whole, not the more, but the less worthy. For who are the children of this world, but the wicked, the class which included the unjust steward, who, to provide for himself, wronged his lord? Such is the testimony of God against this world since man fell, that it stands guilty before God. As the Jews called the inhabitants the sons of the city, those who are living in the world are called the children of this world.

There is, however, another party, who, though living in the world, are not of it, but are called children of light, because the "God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined into their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." To these, therefore, the Apostle says, "Ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light." These are wise to salvation, and thus absolutely wiser than the men of this world. Yet the latter, taken in their own line, or in that generation to which they belong, act more wisely than the children of light. As some may be startled by this, not being easily convinced that it is true, and others may be indifferent to it, not feeling it important; I would first ask, can it be denied, and then, can it be palliated.

1. Can it be denied?

Do not the children of this world act more in accordance with their own proper character, than do the children of light? Nothing throws over a man more of the ridicule of folly than inconsistency. For whether the king play the beggar, or the beggar act the king, each renders himself ridiculous, by being out of character; while the harmony of a man's conduct with his situation and profession, whatever

that may be, secures to him respect. Now, can we deny, that the men of the world show more consistency with their profession than we find among the children of light? How seldom do we behold a man of the world step out of his rank, and assume the character of a Christian; and if you see this at all, for how short a time, and to how small an extent is it ever known! But the children of light! how often do they ape the men of the world! To what an extent is this inconsistency sometimes carried! How long is it kept up! How difficult it is to find a single Christian who acts so thoroughly in character as almost all men of the world do! The ridicule of folly, which the satirists, those acute observers and felicitous painters of mankind, throw over inconsistencies of character and conduct, falls almost exclusively on the children of light; not on the men of this world, who put on the dress of the Christian, but on the Christians who "wear the Babylonish garment, and speak the language of Ashdod."

When a man attends to his own proper business, with steadiness and decision, he is esteemed wise, whatever else he may neglect; but when he neglects his avowed calling, he is accounted a fool, even though he should display skill and talent in another line. Who would call that physician a wise man that should neglect the study of the healing art, however skilfully and successfully he might cultivate music? That minister of religion who should neglect the Bible, to read the Greek and Latin classics, or to study the histories of men, would be said " to have the instruments of a foolish shepherd." However homely the phrase, "Mind your own business," is a maxim as sage as was ever uttered by philosopher or oracle. Then, are not the children of this world wise in their generation? Do they not attend to the affairs of this world? Do not men of the world take their portion in this life? Who has occasion to reproach them for choosing this world and then neglecting it? But do we, who declare that religion is our business, that salvation is with us the one thing needful, equally mind our business? If we expostulate with men of the world for neglecting their souls,

they tell us, "We do not pretend to religion." We do pretend to it; but do we mind it as the great business of life? Do we ever give occasion to say, in reply to their expostulations, "We do not pretend to be men of the world?"

The children of this world go heartily into it; and in this one thing Christ and the world agree, that neither of them wish to have a man without his heart. In the circles of pleasure, or of business, if any one should show that his heart was not in the affair, he would be reproached, and treated as an offence and an encumbrance. But has the world much reason to complain of its children for not bringing their hearts with them? With their whole souls they pursue pleasure, gain, or honour. Can we say that the children of light are equally hearty in their more important pursuits? The God of this world has few lukewarm worshippers. Is this true of the Lord of all worlds? How eagerly do many pursue that phantom, fashion! Others, who care not for dress, are equally intent on gain. Many who disregard both fashion and gain, are devoted to sensuality; and in one form or other, the hearts of men are in the world. They take care that religion shall not hinder them; for they either neglect it altogether, or adopt that form of it which shall help rather than hinder their worldly pursuits, and secure to them, as they think, this world and the next too. They will, sometimes, not scruple to boast that they are too wise to lose this world, of which they know both the nature and existence, for the sake of another of which they know nothing. But have we no lukewarm Christians? Do we pursue another world as heartily as they do this? They rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, in order to get on, as they term it; but how few give themselves so heartily to religion! They are deemed prudent, thrifty men, who go thus heartily into the pursuits of this life; but are there many among the children of light, who can compete with them for the palm of wisdom?

But they carry things still farther, even to the point of enthusiasm, and glory in it. In the world, therefore, to be an enthusiast is not deemed discreditable. We often hear it said, that such an one is an enthusiast for painting, or poetry; that another is an enthusiast for chemistry, or mathematics; and that a third is an enthusiast for liberty, or for honour, or for pleasure. This is not uttered as a censure, nor is it received as such; but the term enthusiast is employed rather as a compliment. It is, indeed, considered a mark of wisdom and genius; for all agree, that in the higher pursuits of human life, no man can succeed without some enthusiasm.) But, in religion, the world and Satan have contrived to give a bad meaning to enthusiasm, and we have tamely submitted to adopt that sense. Children of light, therefore, blush to be called enthusiasts for religion; that very cause which alone would justify to any extent the high inspiring ardour which is termed enthusiastic. Are not the children of this world, then, wiser in their generation than the children of light?

The world's wise man says, "If you would succeed in any great undertaking, you must make sacrifices, and not be afraid of risking something." On this principle, some of the most current proverbs are founded. And do not men of the world act as if they believed the maxim? How costly are their sacrifices! How daring their risks! How much time is spent upon the world! How is health, how is property, sacrificed to pleasure, or honour! What risks the merchant runs, to acquire wealth! Immense sums are embarked on the deceitful sea, sent to far distant regions, and intrusted to correspondents in a great degree unknown, with no hope of speedy returns; but under the impression, that, without these bold adventures, nothing great can be done. But can we say that such sacrifices are made for another and a better world? Who presents to God these whole burnt offerings in hecatombs? Who gives his time to religion, as worldly men to sin? I do not reckon the time spent in the daily duties of our calling, for this may be an affair of necessity rather than choice, with both parties; the man of the world may grudge the time thus spent, and the Christian may do all to the glory of God. With regard to money,

those who know the ways of the world, say, that sabbath-breakers spend as much on that sin, in one day, as those who keep holy the sabbath, spend upon sabbatic pleasures in a whole year. Who, then, are the wise men, that, having chosen their pursuit, grudge not, fear not, to make for it the sacrifices, or the risks, that it may require?

In another way, the children of this world show their worldly wisdom. They mind little things; they say, "by small gains large fortunes may be acquired, as the ocean is made up of drops, and the whole creation is but an aggregate of atoms." They, therefore, attend with astonishing care and perseverance to minutiæ; collecting that which some would throw away; returning the very dust of the gold or silversmith's shop into the crucible, that the smallest grains may not be lost. They take care to turn every thing to account, to enlist all in their cause, to use their utmost influence to promote earthly interest. In this, they are wise in their way, wiser (are they not?) "than the children of light." For ah, who listens to the warning, "he that despiseth little things shall fall by little and little?" How we neglect those spare moments that might turn to good account! How many of our thoughts run to waste! In what various ways do the thrifty tradesmen and manufacturers put us to shame!

Now, in all these things, men of the world seek their happiness. They adopt it as a maxim, that a man should take delight in his calling, whatever it may be. The professional man will sometimes pursue his calling long after the necessity, which first led him into it, has ceased to operate; and he will tell those who ask his reasons, "I take more delight in my calling than I should find in any other pursuit under heaven." If any do not find pleasure (and none find the chief good) in the world, it is not because they do not seek it, but because they pursue it in a wrong direction; looking for snow in the valleys at the equator, or for the rising sun in the west. But if it is confessedly wise to seek our happiness in that which we adopt for our pursuit, they are wiser than we; for they more truly and thoroughly seek their bliss in the world than the mass of professors do in religion. How large a propor-

tion of religious people seem to act as if they thought religion were necessary to our safety, but we must look elsewhere for pleasure! I am ashamed to push this point farther; and there is no need; for it is but too notorious that God has reason to say by his prophet, "Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon, which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters, that come from another place, be forsaken? But my people have forgotten me."

The wisdom of providing for futurity and for posterity, is universally acknowledged in the world. Men will toil for forty or fifty years, that they may enjoy themselves, as they term it, in old age; and they often say we do not live for ourselves alone, since we cannot be long here; but our children are to succeed us, and we hope to live over again in them, and therefore are anxious, not merely for their education, but for their respectable standing in society, after our death. Who among the sons of light is as wise as this? Who looks forward to the religious prosperity and enjoyment of old age, so as to endure, for the sake of it, years of toil and self-denial? Who thinks of living over again in his children, so as to be anxious to educate them for blessings to the church? Who is as solicitous to provide for his children's holiness and usefulness, as the men of the world are for the respectability and wealth of their offspring?

Finally, the children of this world show their wisdom in employing their ingenuity to promote their present or future prosperity in this life. What arts are employed to polish society, and make it pleasant! Who could describe all that is devised to extract heaven out of this clod of earth? If they have hitherto missed the philosopher's stone, they have still produced magical effects; and are not yet satisfied, but are as eager as ever after some new thing to gratify the thirst for novelty and bliss. But who can say that such ingenuity is employed in science, or in arts, to render religion effective and triumphant? Of late, indeed, some advances have been made towards redeeming the church from the shame of leaving all the ingenuity to the world. The consequence has been, that Christians have had higher enjoyment in their

Redeemer's service, and have gone far towards exciting the wonder of the world at the devices put in operation for the welfare of religion; as we have long wondered at what the skill and genius of men have done to adorn and beautify their earthly heritage. But as the axiom that we have considered cannot be denied; so, I ask,

2. Can it be palliated?

Some who would not attempt to question the fact are not much affected by it. But should we be content to see it as a truth, and not deplore it as an evil? Is it not a shame to the children of light to be thus set down below the sons of darkness? Should not light present every thing in its true forms and proportions, and guide our steps in the right path? Should not that heavenly ray that has broken in upon our minds, make us wiser than those on whom the sun of righteousness has not risen, "to guide their feet into the way of peace?" We profess to be made "wise to salvation;" but should not the same light that has showed us what objects we should prefer, teach us also in what spirit we should pursue them? Should we not be stung to shame with the thought that, while wiser than others with regard to the great objects of preference, we are so much more foolish with respect to the spirit in which we devote ourselves to our own proper pursuit? What! does the heavenly light, like the earthly, not only illuminate, but dazzle and bewilder too? Are we not ashamed to be called children of the light, while we are so much in the dark?

For what has this world to present to its children that can be compared with those motives that should operate upon the sons of light? What has earth done for its votaries, that they do so much for it? How has it so completely gained their hearts? By what fascinations does it bind them so fast? By what means has it made them so constant, so stedfast, so devoted, so completely sacrificed to their object; that we must own them to be in their own way wiser than we in ours? Has the world a Saviour of its own; one fairer, kinder, holier, mightier, fitter to win and keep hearts than our Saviour is? If it had, you might coolly yield to them

the palm of superior wisdom, which they so much deserve. But, as you know that there is no other name "given under heaven, whereby men can be saved, but the name of Jesus;" as you maintain that he is "fairer than the children of men;" that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends;" as you feel that his "love passeth knowledge," should it not produce effects unrivalled? Must we not, then, blush when we hear this Saviour pronounce these words, and, falling at his feet, exclaim, "Gracious Lord, can I endure, or canst thou forgive, that any object should be loved more wisely than thyself?"

But what shall we say, when we compare the eternity of that which is properly our world, with the temporary duration of this world. "Everlasting habitations" our Lord sets before us, reminding us that we shall soon fail here. For we know that the "earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved;" we must soon quit the body, and, with it, the world; and should learn, from the unjust steward, to look forward to the time when we shall be put out from our present trust, and should improve what is now in our hands to promote our future interests. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." For the Syrian deity that was supposed to preside over wealth was called Mammon, which name was therefore given to riches, as wine was sometimes called Bacchus. Money, however, is the god of none but the unrighteous; and so much wickedness is usually connected with the love of money, that it is said to be the root of all evil; and the ancients affirmed that a rich man was either a wicked man, or a wicked man's heir. How wise, then, is he who makes such use of this which the wicked worship, that it may do him good rather than harm! Make to yourselves friends by means of it, saith Christ. If you ask how? one Apostle says, "think not that the gift of God is to be purchased by money;" and another, "I desire fruit that may abound to your account, an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable to God." At the last day, the judge will say to some, "Come, ye blessed; for I was hungry, and ye fed me." So much benefit the rich derive

from the right use of wealth, that we wonder and mourn to see them so little anxious to set up a conductor, which shall turn away from them the fire and thunder of these words, "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?" But will those friends whom we have secured by the timely use of riches, throw open the doors of their heaven, to receive us, when we depart hence? Have they the keys of bliss? No, we are rather to understand the expression, "they may receive you," as meaning, like the French on, and the German man, what may be rendered in English by the passive voice, "that you may be received into everlasting habitations." Ah! what a contrast between our failure here, and our everlasting abode there! Here our sight fails; "they that look out at the windows are darkened;" our ears grow dull of hearing, and "all the daughters of music are brought low;" our legs fail, "the strong men bow themselves;" our hands, "the keepers of the house, tremble;" the mind itself fails; the memory becomes treacherous; the imagination dull, and all the faculties feeble: but we go to "a building of God, to a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" to "a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" to "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that cannot fade away." A glorious and immortal body; a vigorous, purified, and blissful spirit; and the society of those holy persons whom we have made our friends on earth, by the due improvement of that trust which God had imposed on us, will richly reward the sacrifices and services of this passing state.

But, one word to the children of this world ere we close this meditation. We have awarded to you, at our Saviour's bidding, the palm of superior wisdom; but do not deceive yourselves; it is, after all, foolish wisdom. "Wise in your generation!" and what is that? The generation of the wicked, the worldly, the vain, the perishing. Wisdom here is like that of a child, ingenious in constructing a house of cards, reckless that the house over his head is in flames. Such wisdom as the Roman emperor displayed in preparing to be his own murderer, — providing silken

cords, golden daggers, or costly poison in crystal cups. But why, when so wise in your own line, do you not choose a better to show your wisdom in? What does it avail to be so prudent for the affairs of a perishing world, and, after all, never reflect that your choice itself is wrong; so that nothing you can do with it can make it answer the purpose of a god? Not all your chemistry can extract heaven out of this earth. While you are a child of this world, you are not a child of light, and all your wisdom is but that of the mole, that works ingeniously in his dark, underground mining. Never, till you quit the world, are you truly wise. Till then, even the folly of the Christian is better than your worldly wisdom; and we must still sigh over you, and say with the man of God, "Oh, that they were wise!"

But, children of light, should not the words of God be fulfilled in you; "They shall no more be haughty, because of my holy mountain?" Away with your spiritual pride, silence your boasting; "though the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," the neighbour is more wise to pursue with skill and decision his inferior course. What a proof that our native depravity is deep, and obstinate, and hard to conquer! For, with all our light and grace, we pursue not everlasting things as wisely as natural men follow after the fleeting shadows of this mortal life. How imperfect, then, is our renovation! How numerous and powerful the motives for seeking to "grow in grace!" Let us live in this world as in a school, where every object teaches us lessons that we need to learn; and where even the wicked and the foolish put us to shame, and should provoke us to jealousy. Some portion of the wealth which is, to others, the mammon of unrighteousness, is intrusted to those who possess the true riches. A wise use of money is as beneficial to our religion as the abuse of it is withering and poisonous. There have been rare instances of the richest Christians who have been the most holy. The good we may do to the church, by means of the blessings of this world, may bring on us the prosperity promised to those "who love Jerusalem." Happy the man who has learned the rare secret of converting into an immortal friend that which is so generally a deadly foe!

LECTURE XXVII.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

LUKE xvi. 19-31.

As the former part of this parable exhibits all that is most alarming in perdition, in contrast with the highest felicities of heaven; while the latter simply sends us to our bibles; I am aware that this forms, in the opinion of many, a descending climax, and will to some appear like raising a flame, and then pouring cold water upon it to quench the fire. But, as I follow in the footsteps of my Lord, I pursue, without reluctance, this course; 'assured that the word of the living God will prove more powerful and persuasive than visitants from the bowers of Paradise, or the abodes of unquenchable flames. Those to whom this may appear paradoxical should reflect, that, for this very reason, it was affirmed by the lips of him, to whose eye heaven and hell, and the hearts of the children of men, were alike "naked and open;" and those who yield to his authority as paramount, should greatly adore him, that, having denied to us those visions which we should have preferred, he has given to us, with increased force, those inspired oracles which he has pronounced the first of moral means.

I. The introductory narrative presents a striking contrast.

This seems, at first sight, to gratify our longing desire, to tear off the veil from the invisible world; and, therefore, it has been eagerly asked, "Has our Lord here given us a piece of real history, or does he speak parables?" There was an early tradition, that this was the history of two real persons; and that our Saviour gave the name of the happy one, only concealing that of the miserable, as we ought to do in

like circumstances. But as we cannot determine this question, what difference would it make to us whether it were history or parable? If the facts really occurred, they are recorded merely for the sake of the general doctrine which they teach; and this is equally taught, if we are to consider the whole as one of the parables of our Lord. Let us, then, seriously consider this contrast, which is exhibited first in life, and then in death.

1. The contrast in life.

The life of the wicked man obtrudes itself on our earliest notice. "There was a certain rich man," to whom the ancient Scholiast has given the name of Ninevel, and modern interpreters have called Dives, from the Latin word for a rich man. He was clothed with purple and fine linen, and regaled himself splendidly every day. He seems to have inherited wealth; for he speaks of his five rich brethren, who needed to be warned, lest, living the same life, they should come to the same end. The purple he wore was probably silk, and the colour was considered a luxury fit only for kings, which gave birth to the phrase 'imperial purple.' The fine linen seems to have been muslin, a production that we have received from the east, where it was reckoned a splendid dress, and was sometimes valued at its weight in gold. But what was his crime, for which he is marked out as an heir of perdition? Silk and muslin are not criminal. Some have accused him of gluttony and drunkenness; but this is to invent crimes for him, since Christ does not charge him with these sins. If others have called him an infidel, who said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" we find that he called Abraham "father," which implies at least a theoretical belief in Scripture. What, then, was his crime? That he was rich? Was not Abraham also rich? This was his crime, that he lived a life of self indulgence; for such a life is guilty, and leads to perdition. Whatever our circumstances may be-whatever license we may have to live according to our rank in society -the continual display of splendid dress will generate pride; and every wise and good man, even in the most exalted rank, will choose to make habitual use of plain attire; for which

some of the most exalted persons have been remarkable, and which distinguishes even some of the richest nobility in our own land, especially where they are under the influence of divine grace. To enjoy ourselves splendidly every day, brings with it such temptations to excess in eating and drinking, and gives such dominion to the appetites, that it is scarcely within the reach of possibility, and utterly out of the range of probability, that we should be entirely free from an approach to the sin of gluttony and drunkenness. Sensuality of mind is so fomented by such a life, that the more wise and virtuous of princes have been praised by their biographers for the frugality and simplicity of their tables. But a pious man, knowing that fleshly lusts war against the soul, will feel it essential to the prosperity, not to say the existence, of religion, to flee from a life of daily festivities. Such a course is utterly unfit for a fallen creature, who has to "work out his salvation with fear and trembling." There was no occasion for our Lord to unveil the invisible world, in order to show that an absolute glutton, or drunkard, or covetous man, or infidel, would go away to everlasting misery; but ah! how many need to be told, that such a man as this, whom the world would call a good sort of gentleman, a fine hearty liver, who spent his fortune in enjoying himself, rather than in doing good to others, may end his history in the flames!

The life of the pious man comes next into view. "There was a certain beggar named Lazarus," which signifies the wretched, who was ulcerated and laid at the gate of the rich man, longing to be fed with the crumbs that fell from his table. This was not what we should call a sturdy beggar, who was able to work and get his bread; for, "if any will not work, neither shall they eat," says Scripture. His ulcerated state is mentioned, not only to express his affliction, but to justify him in wishing to be fed from the table of another. He was laid (by his poor relations, perhaps) at the rich man's gate, which to us may sound strangely; but though we do not suffer such sights at the doors of the rich, in other countries, especially in the east, magnificence and wretchedness might often be seen together. If our poor laws should

prevent such exposure of misery, so should the command of God to the Jews, to provide for their poor brethren, have made it impossible to behold such a scene. But our Lord spoke of things as they were, and probably intended to reprove the Jews for their hard-heartedness towards their poor. The rich man's gate may have been chosen, not only from the hope that the master would pity the poor beggar, or the servants give him some broken meat; but also from the same motive that beggars often attend at the doors of places of worship, in hope that, out of the number of those going and coming, some would give the desired relief. But though it is said, that Lazarus longed for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, for this would have been a feast for him; it is not said that he received any. Not that it is hinted that the rich man was particularly hard-hearted, for then he might have sent his servant to drive away this offensive object from his gate; but he was so occupied with his festivities and his company, that he never noticed Lazarus; or if the servants ever gave the beggar any thing, it was not in a way that brought credit to the rich man.

"Moreover," or nay, even "the dogs came and licked his sores," says Christ, to show that Lazarus was not only diseased, but so naked, that his sores were exposed, and so helpless, that he could not drive the dogs away. Now do not turn away your eyes, and say, "I cannot bear a sight so sickening." For it is Jesus Christ who describes it, and he was more truly delicate than we are, and he looked upon this man with infinite complacency, as a child of God, an heir of the heavenly kingdom. "God has chosen the poor, and the mean, and the despised, taking the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among the princes of his people." If, then, the Lord of glory taught us that such might be the condition of a pious person, even under that ancient dispensation which seemed to produce temporal prosperity to the righteous, what may be the case now that the blessings of salvation are more purely spiritual and heavenly? See within the splendid hall a brand for the burning; and at the gate, covered with sores, an heir of glory. "No man knoweth love or hatred

by what is done under the sun." Not that all rich men will be lost, or that every beggar will go to heaven. But we may infer, first, that prosperity should not generate the presumption that we are favourites of heaven, but should rather alarm us, lest we should have our portion in this life; and, secondly, that, in affliction, we should not conclude God is angry with us, but may say, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

This wide difference in life was followed by,

2. The contrast in death. The beggar died, and the rich man also died; and how different their after state!

The Psalmist said he was perplexed by seeing the prosperity of the wicked, and the affliction of the pious, till he went into the sanctuary of God. "Then understood I their end;" and the end crowns the whole. Let us seek wisdom by considering

The poor man's end.

This is mentioned first, to intimate, perhaps, that it came first; for afflictions often shorten human life, and thus mercy hastens the deliverance of the weary sufferer. But where did he die? From the narrative, we should conclude that it was at the rich man's gate. But if the vulgar eye beholds the beggar dying in the street, on no other bed than the cold, hard ground; with no friend to catch his last breath and close his eye; none around him but the dogs; "anoint thine eyes with eye salve," and see angels hovering round the saint, receiving, with rapturous welcome, his departing spirit, and bearing it away in triumph to Abraham's bosom. Such is Christ's doctrine of the ministry of angels to the heir of salvation; and who would not say,

"Lord, when I quit this mortal ground, And thou shalt bid me rise and come; Send a beloved angel down, Safe to conduct my spirit home."

"Lazarus was borne to the bosom of Abraham." The Jews viewed blessedness as a feast, where Abraham was reclining at the head of the board; so that they who reposed in his bosom were placed high in the happy company. Perhaps, too, our Saviour designed to exhibit Abraham, as a rich man, indeed, but as one who had showed his readiness to sacrifice all for God; having quitted his own country, at the Divine call, and lived the life of a pilgrim upon earth, looking for a better country. At God's command, he offered up Isaac, his dearest comfort, on the altar of obedience and devotion. Lazarus, too, who had suffered much, in obedience to the will of God, was next to Abraham in bliss; for though the beggar on earth could only look on at a feast, and long in vain for its crumbs; in heaven, he sits at the upper end of the board of bliss.

The rich man's hour came, at last; for he also died.

Yes; riches may make us unwilling to die and leave them all, but cannot purchase exemption from the last sentence, or one moment's delay. Many a time the rich man may have thought of this, and looked up and seen the inevitable sword hanging over his head, making him turn pale and sick, and loathe all the dainties of the feast. His death is mentioned last; for neither want nor cold cut short his life (though luxury often does); but every thing that riches or skilful exertions could do, to prolong life, was done, and thus God may show his "long suffering, not willing that any should perish, but all should come to the knowledge of the truth." Here, however, is something introduced, of which there was no mention in the story of Lazarus; " he was buried." To be "buried with the burial of an ass, drawn out and thrown into a ditch," was a judgment threatened to a wicked king; and what was done with the body of Lazarus, is not said. Our Lord was so occupied with the pious soul, and would have us so taken up with the convoy of angels and the flight to glory, as not to be able to think about the poor body. But, now, we must come and see a funeral; for at the last the body of the rich man is all that can bear looking at. See the pampered frame, laid out in fine linen, embalmed with spices, reposing on a bier adorned with golden angels. The funeral pomp attends at the gate, where Lazarus lately breathed out his soul; crowds accompany the march to the

house appointed for all living, where the son of Abraham is gathered to his father's sepulchres, where a splendid monument records his ancestry, and proclaims his titles, his age, and his virtues too. Hired mourners, with voices skilful in wailing, aided by instruments tuned to the minor key, fill the air with doleful lamentations, which compel the most indifferent to weep that so good a gentleman should have been compelled to die, and could not be allowed to live, for ever, "clothed with purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day."

But what magic touch has dispelled all this illusion, and, in the twinkling of an eye, placed before our affrighted vision a terrible contrast? Oh, eternity, how thou delightest to give the lie to the visions of time! Oh, hell, how dost thou reverse all the fallacies of earth! For that adorned corpse, I see an affrighted ghost; for that gorgeous sepulchre, the dreary dungeon of perdition: "in hell he lifted up his eyes." The fragrant fumes of burning spices are dispelled by a nauseous smell of fire; for he says, "I am tormented in this flame." Angels may be on the coffin, but devils surround the spirit; and, instead of laudatory lamentations over fancied virtues, there are shrieks and groans over a sensual life, a soul lost, a God despised and indignant.

Our Lord evidently teaches the doctrine of an intermediate state of happiness or misery, between death and the resurrection. For to plead that this is a parable, is no answer; since parables were designed to teach truths, not falsehoods; and this might have been constructed on the principle of the soul-sleeping system, as well as on the opposite. We might have been told, that, at the resurrection, all the scenes of the present state of being were reversed. But the word that is here rendered hell, does not signify the final consummate state of misery, which is properly called by that name; but should be rendered hades, which signifies the invisible world of souls. In that world, the rich man was in the compartment of wicked and miserable spirits. Therefore, he lifted up his eyes, as if they had before been

always closed, or bent obstinately on earth, blinded to every thing else; but now his eyes are open and elevated to the reality of things, and the eternal consequence of his worldly life. I attempt not to describe the bliss of Lazarus, for "it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love him;" nor can I describe the torments of the lost in Hades, for, "O God, who knoweth the power of thine anger?" This, however, I would remind you of, my friends, that it is not the misery of the body, for that was buried senseless in the dust; but it was only the torment of the soul. Yet have I not mocked you? "Only the soul!" you exclaim. "What! is not the soul, the sentient, conscious being, the real sinner and the real sufferer?"

But, when "he lifted up his eyes, being in torment," what did he see? "Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." This conveys the idea of the lost, seeing, or at least, knowing the state of the blessed, and recognising the persons of those who are in that state. And why should we dispute its truth? We have no means of knowing, without divine revelation; and he who holds the keys of death and hades, here gives us that information. But, to see heaven afar off, what an aggravation of misery! It was well said by one of the ancients, "Heaven burns him more than hell."

Now follows that strange dialogue between heaven and hell, which introduces the axiom, for the sake of which the whole story is told. The rich man cried, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me." When you hear a prayer for mercy, you ask, "Whence does it proceed?" Not from heaven, for its inhabitants need no mercy; "the people that dwell there are forgiven their iniquities." From earth, you say, it must come; for there only, mercy is exercised. But the man has died, and is buried, and it is from the world of woe he lifts this cry. It is vain to say, "There guilt is beyond forgiveness, and misery without alleviation." What though they can obtain no mercy? Will that silence their cries? Will misery hearken to the voice of reason? Will

not despair utter cries which it knows to be fruitless? But to whom does he pray? He cried, "I pray thee, father Abraham;" for, perhaps, our Lord designed to reprove the pernicious notion of the Jews, who said, Abraham sits at the gate of hell, and will not suffer an Israelite, though wicked, to enter. This illusion was now dispelled, and an Israelite, destitute of Abraham's faith, would have shunned the eye of a pious father in heaven, were it not that holiness shines with a fainter lustre in the most exalted saint, than in the infinitely holy One. He, therefore, who could not cast a glance half way to God, cries, "Father Abraham."

For what does he ask? Mercy. But of what kind? Not spiritual, not the forgiveness of sin, much less the recovery of his soul from enmity to God and a worldly mind. No; he asks a drop of water, not from the fountain of life, but for a drop to cool his burning tongue; since misery is here exhibited under the figure of bodily sufferings, because we derive, in this life, from the body, the ideas we entertain of the soul. His misery alone occupies him, and makes him cry, "Water, one drop of water to cool my tongue." This poor drop is all that despair will allow him to ask.

If such was his prayer, what was the answer? A refusal. "Son, remember, that thou in thy lifetime hast had thy good things;" or, perhaps, the order of the original would be more instructive and emphatic, "Thou hast had thy good

things in thy lifetime."

If he claims kindred to Abraham, and calls him, father, the friend of God seems to say, "I own that thou art a son, according to the flesh; but what will that avail thee? Remember!" "Oh agony," the wretched creature might reply, "rather let me forget my good things. If this is all they have left me—if from flowing bowls of wine, I am come to ask for a drop of water, let me forget the past; for the remembrance is most bitter. My good things, what were they? Splendid dress and sumptuous fare. They were, indeed, my good things! Fool that I was, to take them for mine, which are now all gone, and have left me in this misery." "Likewise Lazarus received his evil things."

"Ah! do not remind me of that; for one of his evil things was, that he lay neglected at my gate. Oh that I had administered to his comfort; for then, perhaps, he might have been sent to dip the top of his finger in water, and cool my tongue." "Now he is comforted." "Yes; what consolation! The bosom of Abraham, the friendship of the blessed, eternity of bliss, for a hand-breadth of sorrow. I see the comforts of his soul beam through his eye, glow in his countenance, and throw a halo of glory round him. But, miserable me! I am tormented. There was no need to tell me this. But ah, that great gulf between us! Lazarus might pity and be willing to relieve me; but it is not left to his choice! God has separated him, for ever, from the place of misery, and from all servile service; though I was mad enough to carry my proud notions with me to this place, and conceive of the beggar still waiting on the gentleman. But it must not be. Nor can I pass hence to that state of bliss, where it is my torment to see him. What vain, tantalising efforts I am for ever making to leap that gulf!" Cease, then, sinner, to fancy, that, if you fall into future misery, it may have an end, and that you may pass the immeasurable abyss that is between you and heaven.

What can stifle the cries of despair? "I pray thee, father Abraham," says the rich man, "send Lazarus to my father's house, to warn my five brethren."

What! is there benevolence in the miserable department of hades? compassion for perishing sinners in the breasts of the lost? If there were, what reproaches would this speak to those who profess to be religious themselves, and make no effort to render others so! But it is all pure selfishness. He is afraid of fresh fuel being added to his flames. His own example had taught his brothers to take this world as their portion. Perhaps he had left his property to them, who had enough already, and had forgotten the poor, or the church of God, in his will; and thus, having contributed to their ruin, he was afraid that, when they came to find themselves with him, they would taunt and reproach him as the author of their perdition. Thus, our Lord gives, not a gross

view of future misery, composed of mere fire and chains, and devils, but a more intellectual picture, to show that reproaches for past conduct, and dread of worse things to come, will form the misery of a lost soul.

Again, however, there is nothing but refusal: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." This is God's sentence. The invisible world shall not be unveiled; but the Scriptures shall be the means of mercy, instructing and warning mankind. "Moses," includes the first five books; and "the prophets," all the rest of the Old Testament. But Abraham, who lived before any of these writings were given, sends men to them, to show what value they who lived before a written revelation would have set upon that treasure. A lost soul, however, was of another mind, and this son of Abraham argues with the Father of the faithful against the bible. He would prefer ghost stories, and the testimony of dead men to the word of the living God. "If one rose from the dead, they would repent." But what says Abraham? Let us hear.

II. The concluding maxim informs us of something more useful than all that terrible contrast which we have seen.

This is the moral, for the sake of which the whole story was told. That this was much needed, we may not only conclude from the conduct of our Redeemer in painting such an introductory picture, to give point and effect to the maxim, but from what we know of the tendency of men still to ask for visions, to the neglect of Scripture. To give due force to this grand lesson, we should attend, first, to general considerations, and then to particular reasons.

1. General considerations.

God has endowed us with a rational nature, capable of being convinced by evidence; and to this principle religion addresses itself. The passions and the animal nature should be in subordination to the rational principle, and not take the lead. Is it not manifest that he has constituted this order of things so as to leave his own existence, and attributes, and government, to be thus proved by the calm deductions of reason, rather than forced upon us, by the over-

whelming influences of such manifestations of himself as he could easily have furnished? To our judgments and consciences the Scriptures are addressed; and if we do not hearken to them, the unveiling of the eternal world might indeed work upon our passions; but would the effect, whatever it might be, constitute religion? Does not the calm language of the divine word accord with the silent eloquence of the works of creation, which is ever speaking to us? while the miraculous appearance of one from the dead would be like the hurricane and the earthquake, which are more rarely sent to plead the cause of the great Supreme.

But to say that those "who believe not Moses and the prophets" would repent, if one went to them from the dead, is to suppose that the mere means would be effectual, without any reference to the state of the heart, and the blessing of God, who gives efficacy to the means. It is manifest that every thing affects us according to our character, and that means signify little, without a suitable state of mind on which they may operate. If, then, visions from the dead are not the consecrated means of heaven's appointment; if the Scriptures, on the contrary, are God's chosen instrument; if this word, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is accompanied with his influences, and crowned with his blessing; will not this turn the balance in its favour, and render it preferable, in the eyes of all who know what religion is, and how it is produced?

Is there not, also, another consideration which should have great weight with every rightly disposed mind? If one came to us from the dead, what would be the prevailing consideration? Would it not be human rather than divine? We should attach importance to this man's testimony; because we should say, "He would not deceive us. He has passed from this state of being, in which men are surrounded with a thousand circumstances that induce them to trifle with the truth, and has been in that world where all is serious, solemn, sanctifying, and awful; and therefore we may safely trust his testimony concerning the reality of a future world, the grandeur of heaven and hell, and the superior importance

of eternal bliss, to all present momentary gratifications." What, then, has not God told us all things? Is he not to be believed? Is he not himself the great inhabitant of eternity? Is he not more exalted above all deceptive influences than any other inhabitant of that invisible state? Is not his testimony more worthy of all acceptation? And if we believe the warnings of a dead man, more than those of the everliving God, is our faith genuine? Are its effects to be classed with real religion? Should our faith stand on the sincerity of any man, even though he had gone from this world to another, rather than on the veracity of God?

Do we expect that one from the dead would tell us more than God has told us in his word? Would the visitant from the grave have said to the five brethren of the lost person, "Oh forsake this luxurious living, that plunges you into sensuality; and live for the soul and eternity?" And has not God said as much? Would Lazarus have enforced these things with an eloquence that God does not possess, or exert? Would not this imply that God had failed to do, in his word, what was really necessary to instruct and warn us? Are we prepared to assert this? And would our supposed faith in the testimony of a Lazarus, be founded on such a supposition? Then would it be really virtuous and religious? Or, rather, would it not include an insult upon God and a preference for man? I have no doubt, indeed, that a visitant from eternity would, at first, seem to be a more persuasive preacher than God himself, who speaks to us in his word. But the eloquence of the departed would, like the sudden flash of gunpowder, that startles for a moment, leave us as it found us, saying, "These departed persons may well talk as they do; but if they were in our places, they would live as we do." God has, in fact, told us in this parable, all that one returning from the dead could tell.

These general considerations are confirmed by

2. Particular reasons.

Deceit lies in generals, and we are often deceived by a vague, floating notion of things, which is effectually dispelled by examining more closely and particularly our own false

suppositions. Let us try to dive more deeply into the com-mon opinion, that, though men believe not Moses and the prophets, "they would repent if one went to them from the dead." Should this petition be granted as often as men should think fit to ask for a visit from one who has been dead? Is every one who neglects the Scriptures to be gratified with a vision from eternity? One man would think himself as much entitled to this indulgence as another, and, at length, every man would require that he should see a person from the dead, and learn from him the secrets of the invisible world. Would not, then, these things become common, till visions would be no greater rarities than bibles? Would not the former then produce as little effect as the would not the former then produce as little effect as the latter on men unwilling to deny themselves the gratifications of sense? But are we not conscious that one reason why we seek these visits from eternity is the secret thought, that a thing so rare, so miraculous, would strike us with a force proportioned to its strangeness? This advantage, however, would be lost, in proportion as the rarity was exchanged for frequent occurrence. To say nothing of the hardening influences, which the repetition of the most awful exhibitions would have on our

the repetition of the most awful exhibitions would have on our minds, the grand reasons for our demanding these visitations would be destroyed by the very act of granting such requests.

But it may be said, "No; they ought not to become frequent; they are in their very nature fitted to be extraordinary methods of mercy to men." But who shall decide when they are to be granted? Why should one man be gratified in this way rather than his neighbour? And would not every man fancy that he was the person who should be thus indulged; and that to afford these means to another and not to himself, was an injustice that left him a valid excuse for unbelief, because he had not seen one from the dead? But, supposing we were thus visited and warned, by a rare indulgence of heaven, then what would be the effect of the rarity? Once, in a century, or in an age, or, if you please, once in our life, we are permitted to see one from the dead. How would this operate? At first, very strongly; but by lapse of time, the effect on our passions would subside, our agitated spirits

would calm down, and the effect would depend very much on the operation of our reason. Would not some begin to say, "Am I sure that this was not an illusion? I was too much convulsed by the awful spectre to investigate the thing sufficiently. I did not attend to circumstances that would have decided the reality of the appearance. How do I know who it was that came to me from the dead? If it was a real appearance of a departed person, can I be sure of his veracity? How do I know that departed persons cannot deceive? May they not carry their imperfections with them into another world? It is a long time since I heard the warning, and my recollection of the exact words is beginning to grow faint. Nay, I am not even sure that I understood what he said. at the time; for I was thrown out of myself, by the sudden and terrible appearance; and now I need a second appearance to correct the errors, or supply the defects, left by the first." I pursue this train of reasoning no farther, preferring rather to leave it to yourselves, to follow it out, assured that the more deeply you go into these reflections, the more thoroughly you will be satisfied. In fact, the sceptic Hume has attempted to cut the knot he could not untie, by saying, in reply to all the evidences of miracles, it is more probable that our senses should deceive us, than that the course of nature should have been changed, to prove the Scripture true. Such would be the language of many who might see one from the dead.

These particular reasons are again confirmed,

3. By the testimony of facts.

For some have come from the dead, and to what purpose? Christ raised more than one dead person; and who believed, in consequence of their testimony? It may be said, "We do not read that they said any thing particular;" but, then, I reply, neither do we find that any asked them for their testimony; though we do read that men attempted to silence the voice of one of those risen persons; for "they consulted to kill Lazarus, also, because that, on his account, many went away and believed on Jesus." Jesus himself rose from the dead, and sent his testimony through all the world; and if it should be said that he was not seen in public, I answer, if

he had been, unless he had continued always here, and had shown himself to every man, it must still have been an affair of testimony, dependent on the witness of the Apostles as it is now. In proportion as we employ means which approach to that which this lost soul demanded, rather than to the testimony of the Scriptures, we find that the effect is powerless. In catholic countries, horrifying pictures of souls in purgatory, are exhibited; monks have burned brimstone in the pulpit, to give effect to their sermons, and have fabricated visions from eternity. But what has been the result? Any thing but holy, and lasting, and beneficial.

Facts prove, that eternity is regarded just in proportion as the Scriptures are valued. Show me the man that retires to his closet, to hear in silence the voice of God speaking in his word; and I will, without fear, say, "There is the man who rises superior to purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day; who leaves no Lazarus to perish at his gate, but makes his riches a blessing to the poor, and subordinates to eternity, all the influences of time." Where men recur to ghosts and visions, and pictures of heaven and hell, to tombs and skulls, there vice abounds in all its grossness, and pure spiritual religion is scarcely known; while in the region of bibles, where these are read and understood, and valued, as heaven's choicest gift, there no visions are needed, the voice of God regulates the passions, sanctifies the heart, and makes men live for eternity. If all hell were to rise from beneath, and all its victims were to surround you, with their flames, and their groans, to warn; if all heaven were to come down, with its glorified spirits, to fill your eyes with its forms of loveliness, and your ears with its sounds of blessed harmony, to invite; these would produce far less of holy, permanent effect, than the word of the eternal God, with the force of the Divine Spirit, to enlighten the mind and sanctify the heart. To your bible, to your bible, then, Christians; and remember, that to prefer visions, is to reason like lost souls; but to prefer the Scriptures, is to adopt the mind of the Father of the faithful; nay, more, of Christ, the wisdom of God.

LECTURE XXVIII.

THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW.

Luke xviii. 1-8.

THE Socratic mode of instruction has derived its name from that celebrated moral philosopher, who used to insinuate truth by concealing his design, and leading on his hearers from one admission to another, till they had, without knowing it, conceded the point he intended to gain. In this he employed comparisons not unlike the parables of our Lord, who usually reserved his moral to the last. In the present instance, however, Jesus departs from that custom; and, instead of concealment, opens the discourse with an announcement of his design. The parable is then introduced merely to illustrate and enforce the lesson. To harmonise with Christ's design, we must keep alive on our mind this truth, "that men ought always to pray and not to faint." For, whatever sceptics or infidels may say, prayer is our bounden duty; because it is an act of homage to our Maker, an acknowledgment due to the all-sufficient fountain of every blessing, an expression of our confidence in Him, as graciously disposed to pour forth from his treasures whatever his people need, and an humble casting of ourselves at his feet, in dependence on his sovereign pleasure for the supply of all our wants. It is, therefore, not only a means of grace, by exercising our minds on the attributes of God, but also the most holy and beneficial engagement in which an intelligent and obedient creature can be employed. In prayer, God's character and our own are brought out to view; his word is recalled to our

mind, with all its great and precious promises; and such an intercourse is established between the devout soul and the Father of spirits, as is powerfully calculated at once to humble and exalt us, to fit us for walking with God in willing obedience through life, and to prepare us for the eternal worship of his temple above. But such is our perverseness and depravity, that from this powerful means of obtaining what we need we are prone to turn away; and, if we obtain not relief as soon as we deem it needful, we sink into discouragement, and, fainting, become dumb. Against this prevalent, but most unreasonable temper, let us oppose the force of the parable now under consideration. The tribunals, the applicants, and the issues, equally demand our notice.

I. Two tribunals are here contrasted, that of an unjust

judge, and that of a just God.

The contrast is most perfect between all that a judge ought not to be, and all that we could wish our judge to be.

1. Observe the dark side of the contrast; "a judge who feared not God, nor respected man."

Banishing from our minds the idea we have of a judge, who is, among us, very properly restricted to the interpretation of the law, we must think of one who is rather what we should call a governor, who unites in himself the judicial and the executive functions; or, to assist our conceptions, we may think of what we should call a justice of the peace, or an eastern cadi, who interprets and executes the law, and therefore requires a high sense of justice; for the lives and fortunes of the citizens are, to a considerable degree, in his power.

This magistrate "feared not God;" and thus, by a principle of our law, may be said, not having the fear of God before his eyes, to be fit for every crime. When a man is placed in a high situation, and has the power of doing as he pleases, if he has no dread of a higher tribunal that will rejudge his judgments, what a tyrant may he prove! A regard for the opinion of his fellow men, a wish to acquire popularity, may, however, restrain from crimes, and induce to do that which may attract the praise of men. But here was one who had

no more respect for men than for God. What, then, should restrain him from crime, or prompt him to justice? Nothing but a regard for his own convenience; so that the mere wish to get rid of the importunity of an oppressed supplicant was all that was left to prompt him to give her relief.

2. The bright side of the contrast presents to view the just judge of heaven and earth, the God that rules over all.

For "the Lord loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness, sitting upon the throne, judging righteously." He has, indeed, none above him whom he can fear, but the excellence of his own being is a law to himself. For though he can do whatever he pleases, nothing that is not infinitely just can ever please him. He has none to fear, and none to court: but to satisfy his own sense of what is right and fit, is infinitely more than to please all existing or all possible worlds of creatures, however wise and however good. He reared the whole creation of intelligences to be a theatre for the display of his moral attributes, and superlative glory, as a moral governor. He that planted in our breasts that conscience which judges ourselves and all others, and to which he has given a voice of thunder, to shake the proudest tyrant in his strongest castle, has also given it a power to judge of God's own words and government; and by the sentence it always pronounces in his favour, it is endowed with the most tremendous power to condemn, and thus to punish ourselves. Then, "shall not God, the judge of all, do right?" Has he taken voluntarily the seat of justice, and is he not fit to fill it? Can he who set up other governments in the world, to be miniature images of his own, desert his own institution, or fail to fulfil the expectations which he himself has raised? Should we not settle it in our minds, as a principle never to be questioned, that he will prove a just judge and a powerful avenger of the oppressed? And are we not assured, that he is far from being indifferent to the cause of his afflicted and persecuted people? Though he could not be wearied by us, he is actuated by a higher consideration, that he has chosen us to be his own clients, of whom he has undertaken to be the faithful and almighty patron. Shall not the just judge, then, "avenge

his own elect, who cry to him night and day?" And shall not those who are placed under his government appeal to it? Should the oppressed widow fly, as by a natural and spontaneous movement, to the magistrate of her city; and shall not we, by the promptings of religion, fly to the shadow of the eternal throne, and betake ourselves to the protection of the supreme magistrate of the universe, in all the persecutions and tribulations that we endure? "This is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you suffer. Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them who trouble you, and to you who are troubled, rest."

II. The two applicants should exhibit a parallel; the poor oppressed widow, and the elect people who pray night and day. The comparisons employed to represent the people of God,

The comparisons employed to represent the people of God, though very various, are almost invariably humbling; for we are not likened to what our pride would employ as our representation, but to all that which is most humiliating, which gives the true picture of our case. The exact representative of the people of God is not the rich, the noble, or the mighty monarch, but the poor oppressed widow. From her, then, let us learn "to pray always, and not to faint;" for in this part of the discourse lies the core of the whole.

1. Our necessities are equal to hers.

A widow is often employed in Scripture as a personification of all that is destitute and helpless in human life. "She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, continueth in prayer and supplication to God night and day." This poor widow having lost her husband, her natural protector, was marked out by some unnatural monster as his prey. Defrauded, or plundered, oppressed, and dreading still greater evils, she fled to him that held the seat of justice, for that vengeance which the magistrate should execute on evil doers. Behold the picture of God's elect. Let it not surprise you. Say not, "Surely God's chosen ones will be treated with especial favour; will have the world at their feet; and, instead of being trampled under the feet of others, will command, and

all must obey." "Remember Jesus Christ," God's first elect, the man of sorrows, who was despised and rejected of men; and then you will not wonder that his elect should be partakers of his sufferings, as well as sharers of his glory.

As "we are by nature children of wrath, even as others," depravity and guilt have plunged us into moral poverty, and rendered us the unpitied prey of Satan and his emissaries. "Your adversary, the devil," says Peter, " goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." There is no oppression so cruel as that of sin, which seeks to tyrannise, not merely over us, but within us. If we flee not to the righteous avenger of the oppressed for deliverance, it is a proof that our case is the more miserable, that our spirits are crushed, and the very spark of liberty is quenched within our breast. "The iron has entered into the soul." But I conceive that our Redeemer designs here to exhibit the oppressions to which the whole church and the cause of religion are exposed, by the hostile powers of this world, in order to point out the duty of seeking deliverance at the throne of Him that can make "the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath can restrain." The church and people of God have hitherto been as a poor widow among cruel oppressors. "Behold I send you forth," says Christ, "as sheep among wolves; but beware of men." "The hour cometh, when whosoever killeth you shall think he doeth God service." The poor widow is not able to break the arm of the oppressor, nor is the church of God equal in physical force to the world.

But if Christianity might become a match for her foes by mere strength of numbers, we are forbidden to repel force by force, and commanded to "put the sword into the sheath; for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." The knowledge of this may encourage the unprincipled to trample upon those who are thought to be helpless, because they are patient and unoffending. The whole history of the world, therefore, exhibits the church as this helpless and oppressed widow, from the hour that righteous Abel fell by the murderous violence of Cain, to that in which the princes of this

world crucified the Lord of glory. "They that are born after the flesh, persecute them that are born after the Spirit." Where-ever there has been a church of faithful followers of the Lamb, living amidst a population, ignorant, and sensual, and profane, there has been a struggle between darkness and light, Michael and Satan, sin and holiness; and "oppression has sometimes made the wise man mad," and left the saint to cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true?" What eloquence could do justice to the meek endurance of the oppressed people of God, whose fines and imprisonments, whose "trials of cruel mockings and scourgings," whose loss of civil rights, of personal influence and possessions, have caused the spirit of inspiration to rouse our attention by the exclamation, "Here is the patience of the saints!"

2. Our encouragements to seek help are greater than her's.

Though the unjust judge was, perhaps, too well known to be trusted, this poor widow appealed to him; for what else could she do? To whom could she apply for redress of her grievances, but to the magistrate who is appointed " for this very thing?" When, therefore, she cried, "Avenge me of mine adversary; do me justice, and rescue my property from the grasp of the oppressor;" she showed that spirit which is often elicited by the circumstances in which a widow is placed. She that had been thought incapable of much energy, when her husband was living and she had his arm to lean upon, has frequently become a heroine, when called to be to her children, mother and father. When Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander, falsely called great, once told a woman that he was not at leisure to attend to her application, she replied, "Then cease to be king, if you cannot attend to your subjects." The same spirit has often been displayed by that sex, when the oppression of fatherless children has put into the bosom of tenderness tremendous strength.

The judge, at first, disregarded the widow's cry; "he would not for a while." She, however, desisted not at the first refusal; but came again and again, to him "that feared

not God, nor regarded man;" and who, therefore, offered to her little hope of ultimate relief. Her distress goaded her on, and, while this continued, her cries did not cease.

See, then, the example that our Lord employs, to urge you "to pray always, and not to faint." For you come to a tribunal far higher, where there is enthroned the power against which no oppressor can stand. There may have been no dread of superior power, to prevent the unjust judge from relieving the widow; but some reluctance to take the trouble to crush the oppressor, may be supposed to influence him that was most contemptuous of all power and authority beyond his own. But that God to whom you should appeal, executes justice without labour; can not only tread the op-pressor into the dust, but can, with a look, wither the mightiest of his foes; and, with infinite ease, "put down princes from their state, and exalt the humble and meek." But as he is more able, so is he more willing, to grant relief to the oppressed. He has erected a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly, since the grace of his heart is most encouraging to those who need kindness at his hands. If other rulers have committed the fatal error of making their authority an instrument of cruelty, and the means of giving impunity to the rich oppressor, our God, who hates injustice, bids us ask, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee which frameth mischief by law?" "God is a refuge for the oppressed in times of trouble; and they that know his name will put their trust in him, for he has not forsaken them that trust him." To the infinite activity of his nature, no exercise of power is painful. To his sense of rectitude it is pleasant to do justice; for "the Lord rejoiceth in his works." The physical world was framed for the sake of the moral, and would have no worthy object, if there were no rational and accountable creatures to know and enjoy the attributes and government of God. If the unjust judge cared for no man, and if magistrates in general may be alike indifferent to all applicants, our God has made choice of his own church for the special displays of his grace; and the people of his election are the

prime objects of his regard, being members of his Son, by whom and for whom all things were created. "For my servant Jacob's sake and Israel, whom I have chosen, says God, I have called Cyrus by name."

How much greater, then, are our encouragements to apply to him under all our oppressions and afflictions, and to say, "I will not fear: in the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, flee, bird, to your mountain?" If there was nothing to make the poor widow's application pleasant, when it was directed to one who cared neither for her, nor for any other in heaven or earth; there is every thing to render it sweet to us, to pour out our souls at a tribunal, where is enthroned all that is mighty in power, with all that is venerable in justice, and all that is amiable in grace.

3. Our perseverance in prayer, therefore, should not be less than her's.

Though at first slighted by him that ought to have been her prompt protector, and though grieved with the double affliction of oppression on the part of the enemy, and contemptuous neglect on the part of the magistrate, she did not desist, but cried, again and again, "Avenge me of my adversary." We, too, may seem to be neglected; for God may appear to slight our prayers. To teach us this, our Redeemer, whose soul was most prompt to relieve every petitioner at the first word, and often even anticipated the requests of the afflicted, sometimes acted another part. Do you not now recall the story of the Syrophænician woman? What discouraging repulses she endured! When Christ's own disciples seemed to plead against her, saying, "Send her away, for she crieth after us," he said, what might have cut her to the heart, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." But the result teaches us that "we ought always to pray, and not to faint." For the elect are stamped by Christ with this mark, that "they cry night and day to him;" and this woman forced her relief from the unjust judge, lest by her continual coming, she should weary him. Should not we, then, "pray without ceasing?" For though Christ warns us against vain repeti-

tions, or supposing that we shall be heard for our much speaking, it is no vain repetition to cry till deliverance be obtained; nor does it imply that we expect to be heard for much speaking, when we pray always according to Christ's prescription, and never faint, even though the deliverance seems to be delayed. And would it not be a disgrace to us, and dishonourable to our God, if this widow could persist in her application to an unjust judge, though often repulsed, while we cannot hold out in our application to the infinitely just One, who says, "the prayer of the upright is his delight," and "none shall seek his face in vain?" To "cast off fear and restrain prayer," is the brand of the wicked; and Job asks, "Will the hypocrite always call upon God? Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" But the sincere, the man who delights in prayer, who has cast himself on the Divine power, faithfulness, and goodness, must never sink down into sullen silence, like him who said, "This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait for him any longer?" Would this be to act a part worthy of the children of such a father? Would it not rather he to imitate the children of the flesh towards "the rather be to imitate the children of the flesh towards "the fathers of our flesh, who chastened us for their own pleasure?" If they may go away in sullen silence, as if out of humour with their parent, we must " pray always, and never faint."

III. The issue of those applications.

A wise man will dart forward, through every discouragement, to see the end. We are evidently placed in a state of trial, where things are not to be judged of by present appearances; but the circumstances of life are to be estimated according to the final result.

1. Christ appeals to our own consciences, making us the judges. "Hear what the unjust judge says; and shall not God hear his own elect, who cry day and night to him?" Hear, then, what the judge saith: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest, by her continual coming, she weary me." Though a kind of Gallio, that cared for nobody, he is

not represented as a fierce, bloody tyrant, who would set his guards at this widow to drive her away, or silence her cries with their swords. But being in love with ease, and not caring for justice, or the opinions of men, if he resolved to do her justice, it was merely for his own convenience. Then, what will God, the just, the holy, the benevolent, the compassionate, do for those who cry to him? This woman was a stranger, for whom the judge did not care. Shall God, then, not avenge his own elect, whom he has taken from among men rather than angels, whom he "chose in Christ, before the foundation of the world; that they might be holy and without blame before him in love, and for whom the world stands?" If you ask, "How can I know that this applies world stands?" If you ask, "How can I know that this applies to me, that I am one of God's own elect, so that I may take the encouragement, and be assured that God will hear me?" I answer, By this sign, that you "cry night and day to God." That when you lie down at night, it is with prayer on your hearts and lips, mingling with your first dreams; and when you rise in the morning, it is with eyes directed to heaven, mounting with the early lark to the skies, in the spirit of him who said, "Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning, for unto thee will I pray."

Men of prayer are unquestionably God's elect; for "whom he predestinated, he called" to be conformed to the image of his Son, who was so devoted to prayer, that, on one occasion, he rose very early in the morning and retired to a secret place for worship, and on another, spent a whole night in prayer. Persons of this spirit, who, in all the oppressions and afflictions they endure from a hostile world, cry to God for afflictions they endure from a hostile world, cry to God for protection and deliverance, and put not their trust in an arm of flesh, but in the Almighty, give us reason to say with the Apostle, "Knowing, brethren, your election of God; because our Gospel came not to you in word only, but in power."

Ask, then, your own consciences, whether an unjust judge will hear and avenge a poor widow, because of her troublesome importunity, and a just and holy God, the ruler of the universe, will not avenge the people of his own choice, whom

he has called and inspired with the spirit of supplication, and taught to pray without ceasing, saying, "I will not let thee go without the blessing?" For this is what is called the argument à fortiori; if the poor widow obtained relief, how much more shall God's elect? For surely you would not set up an unrighteous judge above the just God, nor even make God no better than sinful man.

2. Christ decides the case by his own voice, making himself the judge, to assure us that God will hear.

Though our own consciences might assure us of this important truth, we are not left to say, "Perhaps my inferences may be false and flattering." Christ himself has decided the case, and what he affirms every Christian must believe. But he utters what sounds like a contradiction,—that though he bear long with regard to his elect, yet he will hear them speedily.* To us, indeed, he seems to bear so long that we fear he will never interpose in our behalf. Almost six thousand years have the elect been under oppression. There are no reflections so embarrassing as those which arise out of God's long suffering, which puts to the test all the religion of the saints, and has proved fatal to the religion of sinners. These have counted the long suffering of the Lord slackness and indifference, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things remain as they were from the beginning." "But this they willingly are ignorant of, that one day is, with the Lord, as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." To us short-lived creatures, six thousand years

^{*} The structure of the original sentence is peculiar and somewhat embarrassing: καὶ μακροθυμῶν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς. "They cry night and day to him, and he is exercising long suffering with regard to them." Campbell's translation is, "Will he linger in their cause?" thinking that the future of the substantive verb is to be understood with the participle by an oriental idiom. For this he adduces a strong argument, derived from Grotius, who appeals to the son of Sirach; Ecclus. 32. 18. But it appears to me that our Lord contrasts the judge who was afraid of being wearied out, with the judge who is never wearied with his people's prayers. He has so much long suffering, that he is not afraid of ever being wearied out, and yet he will hear us speedily.

seem so long, that we almost fancy they will never come to an end. The ephemeris, that lives but a few hours, would, if endued with intelligence, deem the rapid movement of our globe intolerably slow, for it makes but one revolution during a whole life of the insect. Yet, to us, days fly swiftly, because we live long enough to count many such divisions of time. The Lord will hear us speedily; for though our impatience may wish for more haste than his counsels have decreed, he, who has all things at his command, has "determined the time before appointed, and fixed the bounds of our habitation" in wisdom and in love; and "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." That is quick enough that is well enough; and when his whole plan is developed, we shall find that times, as well as events, have been so perfectly adapted to secure all our best interests, that we shall say, "He has done all things well." "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him;" or, as we should rather read, "there shall be a breathing time for him." The vast image of earthly dominion, that has been striding over the earth for ages, shall be broken in pieces by "the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands; and the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the saints of the Most High." The prayers that heaven has heard for ages shall gain their end. The meek, though long oppressed, shall inherit the earth; wickedness shall hide its head, and righteousness be exalted. God shall hasten it in his time, and thus answer his poor afflicted people's cries.

Yet, "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" It is difficult to decide whether this means faith in his people's breasts, intimating that they will be

on the earth?" It is difficult to decide whether this means faith in his people's breasts, intimating that they will be found fainting, and almost giving over prayer, their hearts failing them for fear; or whether (to which I rather incline) shall the oppressors and the men of the earth be found expecting any such thing? No; they will be still saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" For the kingdom of God will take the destroyers of the earth by surprise. Expecting no such thing, they will be forming schemes for promoting the triumphs of cruelty and sin over religion, when God will arise and snatch the saints from their grasp, and "tread down the wicked as ashes under the soles of your feet." When Christ came to rescue the Christian church from the oppression of the Jews, these did not believe this warning.

Two practical reflections demand our notice; for we are taught that we should know and employ our proper weapon, and then behold and enjoy our prospects.

1. Know and employ your proper weapon.

Amidst all your oppressions, and persecutions, and afflictions, you are in danger of forgetting that "the weapons of your warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Peter is not the only rash disciple who has attempted to cut off the enemies' ears, nor the only one that has felt the force of the Master's rebuke, and the truth of his warning, "all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." For this is your enemies' weapon, not yours. Sighs and tears, and prayers and patience, and indomitable faith belong to us; for they suit our warfare, and shall secure our triumph. Pray always, and never faint; cry night and day to God, the sovereign ruler, the righteous avenger of the just; pray for them that spitefully use you, and evil entreat you; pity them too much to strike them; trust God so entirely with your case, that you can never think of taking it into your own hands, and away with violence. The enemies' weapons have always failed in your hands, and shall not finally triumph in theirs. But your arms of unceasing believing prayer have never lost their efficacy; and therefore, though glorious things are recorded of what an Elijah, and other heroes of the army of the faithful, have achieved by prayer, the final victory is yet to come. "O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour to them." We may know when the season of deliverance is at hand, by the utmost effects of prayer being tried. Look for happy changes, when the church gives herself to plead for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and the putting down of all rule, all authority and power, that exalts itself above the obedience of Christ. Let us join in this battle, that we may share this triumph.

2. Behold and enjoy your certain prospects.

Your Redeemer is mighty, and though he has borne long, and seemed to look on indifferent, while "the blood of his saints was shed like water, round about Jerusalem;" "precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints," and for every drop of their blood will he reckon. "When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them; he forgetteth not the cry of the needy." The decree has gone forth, and the mighty angel shall cry, "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

The Turkish empire, founded by the sword, is perishing by the sword; and so shall every power that, by brute force, exalts itself above the kingdom of God. Perilous is the condition of those that have oppressed the church; for they have an army of saints against them, volleys of prayers, that fly, not like the Persian arrows, to darken the heavens and hide the sun, but like the beams of the sun itself, to pierce the clouds, disperse the mists, and bring the clear day of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you suffer." How fearful is their case, how sure their doom, who have the prayers of the saints, the tears of the oppressed, against them! For these bring down God at length, to interpose for the meek and unresisting. When the last enemy shall lie prostrate at the feet of the church, and she shall sit triumphant as the queen among the nations, then shall it be said, "See what prayer has done."

LECTURE XXIX.

THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

LUKE XVIII. 9-14.

THE alarming assurance which our Lord has given us, that "the things which are highly esteemed among men, are abomination in the sight of God," he virtually here repeats; and adds another, scarcely less alarming, that two persons may appear to the eye of men equally religious, and to the eye of God be as unlike as pride and humility, that which God justifies and that which he condemns. Two persons may have walked up together to this assembly, in external appearance perfectly agreed; choosing the same place of worship, coming for the same purpose, to pray; so that a stranger might conclude, that their sentiments, as well as their movements, were harmonious, and that they were one in heart and in hope. But the eye of God may behold them moving in opposite directions, influenced by contrary sentiments, about to join apparently in the same actions, but tending really to opposite ends; so that when they go down, each one to his house, they will go off in directions as opposite as are taken by the enemies of God and by his friends; those whom he sends away with his frown, and these whom he dismisses with smiles. We who have come up together to this place to worship, should, therefore, institute a deep search into our state, that we may go down to our house justified. What is designed to be taught is enforced by a double process; for here we have not only truth under the disguise of parable, but also presented in the clear form of doctrine.

I. The truth taught under the disguise of parable.

The going up into the temple to pray, refers not to the public prayers of the whole church, but to private devotions, which the Jews were accustomed to offer in the place where the ark and the altar were. Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, thus interceded: "What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, who shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this point, hear thou."

1. The Pharisee is first described as the consummation of false religion.

We cannot, from the popularity of a religion on earth, infer its acceptance with heaven, since we read, that "all the world wondered after the beast;" and they who killed the disciples of Christ were thought to "do God service." A man of the popular sect, a Pharisee, stood and prayed; this being the posture used in the temple, as, indeed, it is the most convenient in the public worship of the church; kneeling, however, where convenient, has many advantages, but it is apt to degenerate into the worst of all postures, sitting. That he prayed "with himself" is said, in our translation, probably to intimate that it was mental prayer, such as we find Hannah using in her supplication before the ark. This mode of offering prayer is calculated to impress on the worshipper the great truth, that it is not the sound of the lips, but the intentions of the mind, and the emotions of the heart, that constitute prayer. Seneca ridiculed those who muttered their prayers, because they were ashamed that men should hear what they were not ashamed to say to God. It is, however, probable, that our Lord designed to say that the Pharisee stood by himself to avoid the touch of others, lest they should pollute him.* The Pharisee's address (for we can scarcely call it a prayer) was divided between his comparative and his positive excellence. "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice a week."

^{*} Thus the Syriac renders the passage; and our Lord represents the Pharisee as addressing God aloud.

He seems to commence well, by thanking God for what he was; but we may thank God with our lips, and ourselves with our heart; and from all the circumstances of the case, with our Lord's comments on them, we fear that this was the conduct of the man before us. Had he really thanked God for what he was, ascribing it to divine grace, he would not have gloried over others, especially the publican at his side, but would have heard the voice that says, "Who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou hast not received? But if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou receivedst it not?" That he was no extortioner was a great thing for a Pharisee to say with truth; as our Lord charges this sect with devouring "widows' houses." The Pharisee seems to allude to the publicans, who were accused of extorting more than was due for the taxes. To be saved from the sin of extortion is a great cause of thankfulness. Happy is he who prefers the moderate gains of equity to all that extortion ever wrung from the oppressed.

That he was not unjust was also a reason for thanks to God. He that acts not justly towards man, in vain professes piety towards God; and he that inflicts, is a greater sufferer than he that endures injustice. But when we think what is included in exact, impartial justice, between man and man, who will venture to say, "I have made my hands clean?" though we may have cause for gratitude, if we have renounced all known and habitual injustice.

That he mentions adultery next, seems to intimate, what we learn from other sources, that the bonds of society were at that time relaxed among the Jews by the frequent violation of the marriage vows. This was branded by the divine law with the utmost infamy. A code which punished few crimes with death, awarded this severe penalty to adultery, as not merely destructive of the dearest interests of society, but also peculiarly offensive in a people from whom Messiah was to descend, in a certain predicted line. Let those who are preserved from this sin, bless God, and guard their chastity as a precious treasure.

But when the Pharisee says, "Thank God I am not as this publican," we naturally ask, "Did the proud boaster know

the man whom he thus gloried over?" Whether he did or not, it was most indecorous to be, at such a time, not absorbed with the presence of the heart-searching God, but looking at man and that with an evil eye. Ah! had he been in the true spirit of prayer, he had been so overwhelmed with the divine majesty, that he could have compared himself with nothing else! In such a frame he could not have made his supplications to his Maker a censure on his neighbour.

The Pharisee blamed, indeed, all mankind; for he says, "I thank thee that I am not as other" or the rest of "men are." He seems to pronounce them all extortioners, unjust, and adulterers, and like this publican. Many who do not believe the doctrine of human depravity, in a scriptural sense, so as to include themselves in the humiliating confession, with a misanthropic belief that human nature is wretchedly depraved, hate and despise their own species. But he that could see all mankind in that state, might have well paused before he excepted himself; and it is only by including ourselves that this doctrine is rendered humbling, and benevolent, and useful.

For his positive excellence, the Pharisee praises himself.

"I fast twice a week." The Greek says, twice in the sabbath; for the Jews called the whole week by the name of that day which divided one week from another. On the second and the fourth day the Pharisees are said to have fasted, as many Christians do, on Wednesday and Friday. But why did he boast of this? Who had required this at his hands? Amidst all the feasts of the Jewish law, God instituted but one fast, on the great day of atonement, which the modern Jews call the black fast. But they made human additions, which always fail of producing their professed end. Had this man's fasting promoted the humiliation for which that kind of mortification was intended, it would have saved him from exalting himself, and condemning others. To boast of our fasts! What a contradiction! If we mean any thing by our fasting, we own that we are unworthy of the food we eat; but if we parade this before God, as a merit, we turn our humility into a justification of our pride, and claim to deserve

God.

much, because we have owned that we deserve nothing. I wish, however, all who profess religion could give God thanks that they fast, whenever the interests of their religion require that profitable aid to devotion.

He boasts also of what he gave: "tithes of all I possess;" or rather acquire, for this is the sense of the verb in the present tense, here employed, and thus the Syriac renders it. The tribe of Levi, being chosen for sacred purposes, were required, in order to save them from secular labours, to resign their portion of the land of Canaan to the other tribes, on condition of receiving from them the tenth of the produce of their lands. To pay tithe, therefore, was an act of justice as well as of piety. But why boast of it?

Some will now ask, "What was there more in this prayer?" But others will say, Prayer! It was any thing but prayer; in the whole there was no supplication. Here was no asking for pardon. Pardon! No; he seemed rather to claim remuneration. Here was no request for grace. Grace! No; he appears to think himself virtuous enough; he has nothing more to ask! All his business at the temple was to tell how good he was; and if he gives thanks, it is for his own virtues, never mentioning a word about God's excellence, or that of any one but himself. Here was no mention of Messiah, Israel's hope and consolation; no reference to the sin-offerings on the altar; no looking to the language of the Psalms, saying, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven." In fact, it is astonishing to see to what extent men

2. The publican is next exhibited, as an example of the commencement of true religion.

may be filled with the thoughts of their own goodness, and lost to all that a sinner should think of in the presence of

Though the men who filled this office, and gathered the taxes under the Roman emperor, were the objects of popular odium, our Redeemer did not yield to the tide of clamour, but often declared that publicans and harlots entered the kingdom of heaven before Pharisees, the national favourites. See this publican. He stands afar off, will not lift up so

much as his eyes to heaven, but smites upon his breast. He kept as far off as the Pharisee could wish, who cried, "Stand by; I am more holy than thou." But it was from God rather, that he stood afar off, according to the ideas of that dispensation, in which Jehovah dwelt in the thick darkness of the holy of holies.

This publican thought, perhaps, within himself, "'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, O God, and causest to approach unto thee;' but I, alas, am unworthy of that blessed approach, which belongs to men more righteous than I." Under the impression of his own defilement, "he would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven," lest his looks should pollute that holy place. If angels cover their faces, with their wings, as unworthy, or unable, to look upon God; and if the prophet cried, "Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" how much more may a sinful man be ashamed and afraid to look up to the heavens, where God's holiness dwells! The sight of infinite purity so covers the convinced sinner with shame, that he cannot hold up his head, nor dare to face the skies.

He, therefore, "smote upon his breast," which has been the action of men of all ages and nations, when under a deep sense of guilt. It may, perhaps, arise from the anguish of the heart, as we are apt to strike ourselves where we feel the agonies of pain; but it is also employed as an expression of deep thought and mental emotion; as if we would gladly inflict a blow on that heart which has been guilty before God. The Scriptures speak of some "mourning like doves, and tabouring on their breasts." Nahum ii. 7. The downcast eye that is ashamed to look on God, the hand that smites the breast, and would fain inflict the blow of holy revenge on the heart that dwells there, were the signs of that genuine repentance which our Lord ascribes to this publican.

He cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

In four or five words he speaks volumes. Some have thought that, having just heard the ten commandments repeated in the service of the temple, or seen them hung up, as they still are in the Jewish Synagogues, he, struck with their rectitude and extent, exclaimed, "I have seen an end of all perfection, thy commandment is exceeding broad. God be merciful to me; for I have sinned against all these commandments." But he is represented by our Lord, as coming up to the temple to offer the prayer which is here recorded, as the Pharisee did to speak his own praises. Hear the cry of the contrite: "Me a sinner!" How specific! how personal! how sweeping is the confession! Some content themselves with a general acknowledgment, "Ah, we are all sinners;" as if they would lighten the burden, by dividing it among all mankind. This man, however, takes it all to himself, and thinks of nothing, but "me a sinner." Some own that they have done wrong, yet do not at all admit that they should be set down as sinners, but rather claim to rank among just persons. The true penitent is brought to view himself just as the Scriptures describe him. The convinced spirit feels that death is the just wages of his sin, because "the soul that sinneth shall die," is the language of the law of God. Some contend that there are more good things than evil, even in the worst; so that there are in the wide world none who are, upon the whole, sinners: but he that knows himself knows, at least, one sinner.

This penitent casts himself on mercy; "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Some are guilty of the strange contradiction of pleading their repentance as a righteousness. It is true that repentance shall not be in vain, for "a broken and contrite heart, God will not despise." He has promised that, "he who confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy." Repentance and remission of sins are chained together by the eternal hand. But two things may be connected together, without making one the cause, especially the meritorious cause, of the other. If repentance were ever so sincere, ever so perfect, it could give no claim to pardon. Human governments, when they have condemned a criminal to suffer the penalty of his crime, never consider his repentance as a claim to pardon. Claim to forgiveness, is a contradiction; for, unless forgiveness is free, it is nothing. But what is our

repentance, when scrutinized by the eye of God, and compared with our sins? All who have true penitence, convinced that it is utterly imperfect, are scarcely more ashamed of their sins, than of their repentance, exclaiming, "Mine is a mockery rather than an atonement, and when weighed against my sins, is a mere feather against a world." The publican, therefore, does not plead his repentance, as the Pharisee his fasting and tithes. The contrite soul will say, "What is there in my seeking my own interests, to entitle me to forgiveness, after having violated my duty towards my Maker?"

But what is the preacher about? some of my hearers may exclaim. "Is he not shutting us out of all hope derived from our repentance, or the pains we have taken to seek God's favour? Is not this driving us to despair?" I know it; I know it; I intended to lead to despair of all things in ourselves, of every thing but God's mercy. I would have you say with this penitent, "Me, a sinner; all that I can say of myself, is against myself—that I am a sinner. If I say any thing that will plead for myself, it must be derived from God. God be merciful, be propitious to me; deal with me as having received a propitiation for me." For "God has set forth his Son to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the forgiveness of sins." Thus was the way of mercy, by a sin offering, set forth in the law. I have, therefore, closed against you, my dear hearers, every door of hope, that you may be "shut up to the faith" that reveals an atonement for sin. But why do I say, I have closed every door? They were closed against you already. There is no other way of escape open to a sinner, but that of pure mercy, through the atonement of Christ.

We have listened to our Redeemer speaking parables; and it now remains that we study,

II. The truth clearly revealed in the form of doctrine.

In the ever varied mode of instruction contained in Scripture, we sometimes find scarcely any thing but the picturesque story, and are left to search for the moral. Here,

however, the dogmatic is almost equal to the scenic portion of the discourse, and leads us to consider,

1. The statement which is contained in the preface to the parable. "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:" v. 9.

Hear, ye that trust in yourselves that you are righteous. This word is spoken to you; this sermon was intended for you by the Saviour, who should now be considered as the preacher. Some have attempted to palliate the character of the Pharisee, and argued that Christ did not intend to represent him as a man deceiving himself with false religion. But what will not men say and do, to pervert the Scriptures from their obvious design? If this was not a description of a man that trusted in himself that he was righteous, the whole parable was a mistake. But if it was, then his thanks to God were false. Had he been sincere, he must have trusted, not to himself, but to God for righteousness. Nor, indeed, could his thanks have been sincere and intelligent; for he professed to view the rest of mankind as sinners; and what reason had he to conclude that he had been preserved as an exception to the general rule? If he fasted twice a week, and had any sincerity in those frequent acts of humiliation, he must have humbled himself before God for sin, which was the great design of God in appointing the grand fast of the day of atonement. How, then, could be that did all this, trust to himself that he was righteous? He, therefore, stood convicted by the contradictions in his own religion. All false religion is, indeed, self-contradictory, and there is no consistency but in sincerity. Ah, beware of trusting in yourselves that ye are righteous; for all such confidence is false. "There is none righteous, no, not one," when tried by the law of God, the rule of righteousness; neither our hearts nor our lives can stand the test, but we must be condemned as sinners.

Those persons for whom Christ uttered this parable, were those who, through confidence in their own righteousness, "despised others." This was designed to be set forth in

the speech of the Pharisee,—"God, I thank thee that I am not as this publican." Self-righteous persons are known by their pride and their haughty notions of superiority. In the church of Rome, this has been carried to such lengths, that men have talked of works of supererogation, merits that went beyond the bounds of law and obligation; so that, having more than they needed for themselves, they bequeathed the superabundance to the church, to be dealt out in the shape of pardons and indulgences to sinners who had not merit enough. The same pharisaic pride has been betrayed by many who call themselves Protestants, and toss their heads with high claims to superiority. But he who despises others, has no real religion of his own. Penetrate to the depth of your own souls, my friends, look back on all your ways, and you will no longer trust in yourselves that you are righteous; no more will you despise others; but say, "Of sinners I am the chief."

2. The conclusion is added as an application. "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

A vain desire to elude the force of the whole lesson has induced some to interpret these words thus: "The Pharisee went down to his house justified; but the publican more so." Yet the whole design of the parable would be lost, if it did not show the evil of trusting in ourselves as righteous, and did not prove that he who exalts himself is abased. The Scriptures know no comparative justification; but every one who enjoys this blessing is freed from all condemnation; for "there is no difference, but all are justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified." Both Scripture and ordinary speech often adopt the phrase "this rather than that," when the meaning is, "this and not that."* This man boasted of the works of righteousness he had done; and

^{*} Proverbs viii. 10. "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge, rather than choice gold." The ellipsis in the original is common with the Greek writers, and we have, in the Greek of Mark ix. 43, the same idiom. Sacy, therefore, gives the true sense, "and not the other."

what saith the Scripture? "Not to him that worketh, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly; his faith is counted for righteousness. Where is boasting then? It is excluded."

But when our Lord says of the publican, "This man went down to his house justified," it intimates that he went forth from it condemned; for there is no medium between these two states. Learn, then, the doctrine of instantaneous justification, and that by faith. For here was one who, with his burden of guilt, cast himself on God's mercy, and instantly went home justified. This could not have been by works, but must have been the result of that faith which he exercised in the divine mercy. Justification is, indeed, an act of God's grace, pronouncing our sins forgiven, and our persons accepted as righteous. It is the work of a moment; and "he that believeth passes from death unto life, and shall no more come into condemnation." Oh, that it may be seen, today, how happy is the man that goes down to his house from this place justified! To him will be fulfilled the word, "Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace." "Go thy way; eat thy meat with gladness, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." There is no more curse on thee or thine. Well may "the voice of rejoicing and salvation be heard within the tabernacles of the righteons." The sweet Psalmist of Israel sings "the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness without works." Acceptance with God sheds a gladsome light on the dwelling of the justified, who hears it said, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

- 3. The axiom that arises out of the parable is all that now remains for consideration.
- "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Can he that exalteth himself be sensible of his true character and state, or of the overwhelming glory of God and his law? If we know ourselves, we shall study to abase our-

selves, conscious that the dust of abasement is our proper place. He, therefore, that lifts up his head and magnifies himself, talking of his merits and his claims to his Maker's favour, must think, not only much of himself, but little of God; for he that sees God aright cannot lift up himself before the infinitely Holy One. God has determined to abase such as plead their own merits; and what abasement must it be to find themselves, not justified, but condemned! Whoever fancies he has whereof to glory before God, thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think, like a proud king of Babylon, shall hear this sentence,—"Tekel, thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting;" and shall confess, that those who "walk in pride, God is able to abase." What! found wanting, when I am not as other men are; when I fast twice a week, and pay tithes of all I possess! What! abased so low, that even this publican should go down to his house justified rather than I? Yes; such is the abasement to which the self-justifier is doomed. The "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before them." But who shall describe the depths of abasement to which they go, if they die without being justified, and are "put away with all the wicked of the earth, like dross?" To have once lifted up the head above others, and

find at last that we are banished among the vilest of creation!

"He that humbleth himself shall," on the contrary, "be exalted." Every true penitent humbleth himself. Real religion is to our proud nature great humiliation. To some, it seems past endurance. To be described as utterly depraved by nature, a child of wrath, an heir of hell; to have all our own righteousness pronounced filthy rags, our best preformances set down as nothing in point of justification; to be told that we can never be justified but by the righteousness of another, and that by the same method the chief of sinners might be justified, as well as we; to submit to receive from another, strength to serve God, as well as merit to be accepted with him; that in Christ the Lord we have righteousness and strength; seems to many a most provoking insult. They spurn this way; and one preacher of righteousness by works

publiely declared, that "heaven itself, unless merited, would not be worth having." But he that is convinced of his state, welcomes mercy, as suited to himself and accordant with the word and character of God. Every one that knows himself, is is so far from refusing to receive salvation in God's way, of mere grace, that he only wonders that he can be saved at all. This man shall be exalted, by being justified. When a person under conviction of sin is brought to cease to contend against God and his law, and accepts, as it were, his own condemnation, consenting to the law as good, even when it worketh wrath, knowing that it would be glorified in his eternal condemnation, he soon finds peace, and "goes down to his house justified." How exalted is that man! For who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect, when it is God that justifieth? What exaltation is equal to that of being able to lift up our faces before the judge of all, and to challenge the universe to bring a charge against us? What honour is like that of "Abraham, who believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God? It was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord." What exaltation! to be covered with the righteousness of Christ, which is unto all that believe!

How truly, then, is it said, "before honour is humility!" The Christian, like his Saviour, first makes himself of no reputation, and then is highly exalted. For all who wear Christ's righteousness are adorned with such a robe as angels do not wear—the righteousness of God. O let this saying, this favourite saying of our Lord, sink down into your hearts! Three times he uttered it; not that he wanted variety of thought or expression; for he could have held us in perpetual astonishment by the novelty of his ideas and the endless change of his language; but he chooses to harp again, and again, and again, on this string, that we may never have its sound out of our ears, and never cease to feel it strike upon our hearts,—"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

LECTURE XXX.

ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

MATT. xix. 3-12. MARK x. 2-12. LUKE xvi. 18.

Questions proposed for the sake of obtaining information on religion, should be welcomed, by Christians in general, who are charged to be ready to give a "reason of the hope that is in them," and especially by ministers, who are "set for the defence of the Gospel." When a candid and teachable person is anxious to learn, we may do more, in less time, than when we press the subject which he wishes to avoid. But questions raised with captious intentions intimate the worst state of heart, and expose men to the just judgment which God, by the mouth of Ezekiel, denounced on those who came to consult the oracle of heaven, "I will answer them according to the multitude of their idols."

"God taketh the wise in their own craftiness;" and when the Pharisees, mortified at Christ's sentence on marriage, as recorded by Luke, and as we have seen it in the sermon on the mount, summoned their forces, and came to question him on the same subject, hoping for an opportunity of accusing him to the Sanhedrim, as a despiser of the law of Moses, or to the public, as contradicting himself, he seized the opportunity to enlarge and establish his own doctrine, and to place the law of Moses in such a light as put the enemies to shame. We have, therefore, now to consider the original law of marriage; the alteration made by the Mosaic institution; and the rule which Christ has given to his church.

I. The original law of marriage given at creation.

The Pharisees ask, "whether a man may put away his

wife, for every cause," saying nothing about the rights of the wife, for they held degrading notions of the female. But who does not see the wickedness of the question? Any cause is no cause at all. Such a slave to the unreasonable caprice of a husband they would make the woman! From this deprayed view of things our Lord appeals to the history given by Moses, in whom they professed to believe.

1. Review, then, the inspired history of the origin of mar-

riage: v. 4, 5.

"Have you not read?" To all our errors this reply may be made; for the Scriptures are a perfect institution of the Christian man; and we "err, not knowing the Scriptures;" reading them as though we read them not; catching the words, but missing the sense. In all difficulties, we should ascend up to first principles, which will throw light on subsequent arrangements. This is particularly true and important with regard to marriage and the sabbath, which, it is well observed, were both instituted in Paradise. The value of the Scripture record of the origin of the universe, never appears more clearly than when we read of the creation of the female half of our race, which, but for this precious volume, must be unknown. Here we learn that woman was created from the man, so as to be intimately related to him; in fact, a part of himself. She was given to him as a blessing, to afford him the comfort of rational and affectionate society; since he, made for social life, could not be happy alone. He "that made them in the beginning, made them male and female;" or rather, a male and a female, that is to say, one of each sex; and this was the creation of the complete human species. The quotation seems to be, not from the first or second chapters of Genesis, but rather from the fifth.

Now, all wise and holy persons must feel that God had a right to make us for what purpose he pleased, and that it is a creature's first duty to comply with the design of his creation. The inspired history teaches us the identity of the two,* who were formed by the immediate hand of God, for

^{*} The narrative of Moses is appealed to, four times, in the New Testament,

they are both called Adam, or man; and the restriction of marriage to what is termed monogamy, or the union of a single person of one sex with a single partner of the other, in opposition to polygamy, which usually means the marriage of one man to many wives, but may also signify the marriage of one woman to several husbands. There was but one woman formed for one man; "but wherefore one?" the prophet asks. "Had he not the residue of the spirit," vital power yet remaining, so that he could have formed more than one woman? Our first father, therefore, called the first woman Isha, a word formed by adding the feminine termination to ish, a man; as the Latin from vir, a man, calls her virago, not intending what we mean by that word, but what might be rendered female man. Adam said of her, "This now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; for this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." The closeness of this relation, and its superiority to any other, are thus suggested; for as the conjugal preceded the parental and filial bond, so it should be preferred to every other. Our father and mother are indeed the first relations we know, and we owe to them, under God, our life, and all our early advantages; but we must quit their house and their society, for the sake of the conjugal bond, which claims to supersede every other. All this, observe, is applied to a wife, not to wives; so that the original institution knows nothing of polygamy; and our Lord appeals to that institution as the model and rule of marriage.

2. Hear the inferences drawn from the history.

The inviolability of the marriage bond is the conclusion to which we are led. "They are no more two, but one flesh," till death, that separates our very body and soul, shall dissolve the bond. For God has joined them together, having formed them for union. He brought the woman to Adam, and, as a father, gave this his daughter away in marriage.

and the word $\delta \omega$ occurs in them all. The ancient versions, except the Chaldee of Onkelos, lead us to conclude that a correspondent word was originally in the Hebrew text, which does not now contain it.

He, therefore, considers himself insulted when his work is destroyed. Let not, then, a mere creature, dependent on his Maker's will, set himself up as authorised to derange the divine order, and part what God has joined together. Hear it, O man, and at thy peril disobey, by sowing dissensions between two, who should be joined in heart; or by indulging in alienation from thy wife; or, by unfaithfulness to the marriage bed, breaking the bond; or by unjustly seeking divorce from her to whom thou hast vowed fidelity until death. The authority assumed by ecclesiastical powers to dissolve the bond of marriage, sets at defiance the solemn charge of our sovereign Lord and final judge. Man has dared to part those whom God has joined together. Human governments, by making laws for marriage, different from those of God, fall into the same sin. Those who give undue liberty to divorce, do, in effect, separate those whom God has joined; as the desire for divorce is often created by the facility of obtaining it, where the inviolability of the bond would have led the parties to accommodate their tempers to each other, and live happily together until death. But they who weaken the ties of marriage, dissolve the bonds of society, which, as it sprang from the conjugal union, is still held together by it. Our own marriage laws are most anomalous, unreasonable, and unjust; giving to the rich a license which is denied to the poor, and creating disorders in society, which will never be remedied till we return to a due regard for the wise and impartial law of God.

II. The reason for the alteration made by the law of Moses: v. 7, 8.

There is some difference in the two gospels: Matthew saying that the Pharisees introduced the appeal to Moses; while Mark says, that Christasked, "What did Moses command?" But, perhaps, this last was in reply to the Pharisees' appeal to their national legislator, whom they loved to set up against Christ. Consider, then,

1. The apparent discrepancy of the Mosaic with the original law of marriage.

It would seem, from the different Evangelists, that several speakers interposed, one saying that Moses commanded,

which another perceiving to be false, corrected, by saying, that "Moses suffered to write a bill of divorce." This last was the true statement. The record is in the book of Deuteronomy, xxiv. 1—4.

This, you will observe, by no means sanctions the liberty they assumed, to "put away a wife for every cause." A specific cause is assigned, which appears more clearly in the margin than in the text of our translation, and was such a cause as defeated one of the important ends of marriage, and made it necessary to permit, if not to command, divorce. The design of the Mosaic law, was to render divorce a solemn, legal, authorised affair; and to prevent the marriage bond from being dissolved in a fit of humour, or in a private way. For marriage is a bond in which society is so deeply implicated, that it has a right to cognizance of it; that we may not be exposed to the insult of having our wives and daughters introduced to the society of harlots. But the Pharisees, who set up for zealots and interpreters of the law, took this regulation of the mode, in certain cases, for a command, or, at least, a permission to divorce their wives for every cause. Thus Moses has often been set up against Christ, by those who understood neither the one nor the other. We have heard our Lord correct these errors, on the mount of the beatitudes.

2. See, then, the real harmony between the law of Christ and that of Moses.

"For the hardness of your hearts," says Christ, "Moses wrote you this precept, and suffered you to put away your wives." Often did Moses accuse this nation of hardness of heart, telling them, that God said, "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people." The prophet Malachi severely reproves them for their cruelty to their wives; and what we render in the text "he," that is, God, "hateth putting away," is in the margin, "If he hate her, put her away," though the former is the better translation. A hard-hearted man, who had conceived a dislike to his wife, from whatever cause, would be in danger of treating her cruelly, if compelled to retain her. It was, therefore, deemed

better, that he should have the liberty of divorce. Providence, which is the government of God, suffers many things which he does not approve. The law on which our Lord comments, made divorce, not only solemn, but, in a certain sense, irrevocable; for the husband was not allowed to take back the wife who had been married to another man. This was designed to hinder, rather than sanction, divorce; for they who have put away their partners, often wish for them again, when they see them in the possession of another; but when they know that marriage to another for ever precludes a reunion, men will pause before they perform that, which, however they may repent, they cannot rescind.

But, whatever we may say of this law, it should not be forgotten, that Moses, who delivered it, wrote the record of the creation and of the divine institution of marriage. The voice of Moses should sound in the ears of all true Israelites, " From the beginning it was not so." After hearing Christ's exposition, if we claim the benefit of the permission of divorce, should we not ask ourselves, "Is not this confessing the hardness of our hearts?" Thus Moses is testified by Christ to have been faithful in all his house, and to have been so far from contravening the original law of marriage, that it was he, who, by publishing it, commended it to the world. The same hardness of heart that caused the avenger of blood to pursue him that had killed another accidentally, gave occasion for the cities of refuge; and the same ferocious disposition that exposed a hated wife to the danger of being tormented, or, perhaps, even murdered, caused the law of divorce to be granted.*

The conclusion is this, that marriage, being instituted in innocence and Paradise, requires benevolence, which Adam expressed, when he called Eve his bone and his flesh. Where this disposition prevails, a man will no more seek divorce than our first parent would have done in Eden, where there was no other than this half of himself, to whom he could have been united. Who ever heard of divorce

^{*} The law of Christ on marriage, may be seen in Lect. V. on Matt. v. 31.

between two amiable persons, influenced by their Maker's authority, and obedient to the law of their creation? Who needs to be told that divorce is the refuge of moroseness, selfishness, hard-heartedness, lust, cruelty, and pride? Who, then, would willingly bear the brand of having availed himself of the permission, designed to prevent a man of a stony heart from torturing his own flesh, or even murdering her whom he should love and cherish as himself? Certainly no Christian needs the license granted to the hard-hearted.

III. The law as it now binds his disciples, our Redeemer

lays down, v. 9-12.

The Pharisees, silenced and disappointed, seem to have withdrawn and left Christ to retire into the house with his disciples, who, full of the subject, and somewhat embarrassed by their Master's discourse, took the opportunity which his condescension afforded, to seek further information. Let us imitate them, by receiving that additional instruction which Christ's remaining words were designed to give, concerning the three following things:

1. The dissolution of marriage: v. 9.

No man is allowed to divorce his wife, except for a violation of the marriage vow; but adultery, committed by either party, gives the other a right to divorce. For as marriage was instituted between one man and one woman, and was designed to last for life, each party becomes sacred to the other. "A woman is bound by the law to her husband, as long as he liveth; and the wife has not power over her own body, but the husband; as the husband has not power over his body, but the wife." "Let every man have his own wife," not wives; just as it is said "Let every woman have her own husband," which we do not feel ourselves authorised to change into husbands. Thus polygamy is condemned by Christianity.

But adultery breaks this covenant, and sets the injured party free. It does not appear that the Scriptures admit of what our law terms condonation of adultery, that is, forgiveness, so as to perpetuate the bond, after the commission of

adultery.* This condonation is generally a license conceded to one party only, the man; who, having his wife in his power, as more yielding, and more dependent on him for support, receives that forgiveness which he would not grant, and thus makes the marriage bond loose to himself, and firm to his wife. God, the common father of the two sexes, gave an impartial law, which equally bound both. But marriage is considered in Scripture, as dissolved by adultery, so that no farther conjugal intercourse is lawful, while it is only the injured party that is left free to marry again. To leave the injurer at liberty to marry, especially with the person with whom the adultery was committed, is to give a premium to crime. It is true that this is a severe sentence on adultery, but not so severe as the Jewish law pronounced, when it sentenced both the guilty parties to death. If they who violated the marriage bond were deemed unfit to live, they may well be considered unworthy to be trusted on a second vow. Here our law of marriage and divorce egregiously errs, conceding that relief to money, which ought to depend on equity. By the enormous expenses of divorce, a poor man, whose domestic comforts are his all, is virtually excluded from the remedy against an adultress which the rich can obtain.

There are other causes of putting away a wife, which men have sanctioned and Christ condemns: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and marry another, committeth adultery against her; and if a woman put away her husband, (the same exception being understood,) she committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away, committeth adultery." Here the guilt of three adulteries lurks under one divorce. The husband, by putting away his wife, without just cause, and marrying another, commits adultery; he causes her to whom he gave the bill of divorce, permitting her to marry again, to commit adultery;

^{*} Milton gives the title of one of the heads of Martin Bucer's work, which says a manifest adulterer ought to be divorced, and cannot lawfully be retained in marriage by any true Christian.

and the man who marries her commits adultery. Observe that nothing but monogamy is recognised; for it is only when a man puts away one wife, that he is supposed to marry another. This sentence, our Lord now deemed it necessary to pronounce; because the Jews had, to that license of divorce and polygamy which they had assumed, added the greater licentiousness introduced by the Romans, who then ruled in Judea. These masters of the world were originally celebrated for the honour they put upon marriage; so that from the foundation of the city, to its 520th year, divorce was among them unknown. Spurius Cabilius first repudiated his wife; because she bore no children. Though he was censured, he was soon imitated; and from that hour corruption advanced so rapidly, that even Cato, their celebrated moralist, resigned his wife to his friend, who, dying, and making her his heir, her former husband took her again. These dissolute manners came into Judea with the Roman armies, and Herod took his brother Philip's wife, and, at length, killed John the Baptist for condemning the crime.

But it deserves special notice, that our Lord speaks here solely of putting away, or divorcing, a wife or husband. This seems to have escaped the acute mind of the celebrated Milton, who appeals to this passage on the question of desertion, of which we have here no mention. From other parts of Scripture, we learn, that if a husband, or wife, wilfully deserts the partner of their life, to whom constant cohabitation was plighted at marriage, the injured party has a right to consider the bond broken, and the remedy of another marriage lawful. " If the unbeliever depart, let him depart: a brother, or sister, is not under bondage in such cases." If any say, this is only in the case of an unbeliever deserting a Christian, I answer, it is the act of desertion, and not the character of the person deserting, which gives the Christian the right to consider himself at liberty to marry again, as the whole argument of the Apostle shows. It would be absurd to suppose, that the same act in a Christian would be less criminal than in an unbeliever; not to plead, as we might, that the wilful desertion of a husband, or wife, contrary to the vow of marriage, destroys a person's right to be considered a Christian, and ranks him among unbelievers. Had Milton duly considered this, he would have saved his memory from the blot brought upon it by his Treatise on Divorce, which all the truths it contains, and all the splendour of talent which it displays, cannot redeem from censure. He wrote under the irritation created by a desertion, which political causes seem to have produced; and the passions, though zealous servants, are deceptive guides. He had no occasion to contend, that marriage might be dissolved for want of pleasant temper, which would make the bond dangerously loose. An intolerable temper will often, as in his own case, lead to desertion, which then entitles the deserted party, by the law of Christ, to marry again. The comments which the disciples made on Christ's decision call us to notice,

2. The necessity for marriage, v. 10, 11.

The disciples seem to have been infected with the false notions of their country and age, (for who is not?) and to have thought, if the bond were so strict as our Lord made it, it "were better for a man not to marry." Other causes of divorce, beside adultery, were allowed by the Jews, and by many Gentile lawgivers, such as sterility, deformity, drunkenness, violent temper, prodigality, and attempting the life of a husband. In the latter case, the person becomes a murderer, punishable with death. But to grant a divorce for some of the other causes, is to allow a man to "put away his wife for any cause," or no cause.

Circumstances may have made a marriage null and void, ab initio, or no marriage at all from the first; such as one or both of the parties being already married; certain bodily defects; or such mental imbecility, as precluded rational consent; and in such cases we cannot so properly say that they furnish other causes of dissolving the bond beside adultery, as that they prevented the bond of marriage from ever being truly formed.

The disciples, supposing their master to forbid divorce ex-

cept for adultery, exclaimed, "If the case* be so with the man, it is good not to marry." They seem to have thought of the sentence of Scripture, "It is better to dwell in a wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman;" or "in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." The son of Sirach also says, "I would rather live with a lion and a dragon, than with a wicked woman." Celibacy they pronounce better than marriage with no opening for divorce, except in the case of adultery.

What is Christ's answer to this difficulty? "You propose celibacy; but that is not a preferable state for every man; all men cannot receive that word: it suits those only to whom the gift of continence is granted by the God of nature." To such it may be good to avoid the inconveniences of marriage, and the risk of being united to a woman whose infirmities, or vices, have been supposed to grant to a husband a right to divorce his wife. "It is good," says the Apostle, "for a man not to touch a woman; but all men have not that gift from God;" for thus Paul lays down substantially the same law as Christ here delivers. See 1 Cor. vii.

The Christian doctrine decides, that, whatever hardship may be thought to attend the strict interpretation of the claims of marriage, it is not allowed to every man to say, "Then, I will not marry." For the lawfulness of that decision depends on the gift of the God of nature, and the constitutional ability afforded to a man to maintain, both in body and mind, a chaste celibacy. It may be a duty to marry. When it is not, the Scriptures lead us to conclude, that it is rather a duty to live single, in order to give ourselves more entirely to the service of God, than the cares of a family will allow us to do. The forced celibacy of Romish priests, and monks, and nuns, is a violation of the law of nature and of Scripture, showing of whom the Apostle spake, when he denounced some for "forbidding to marry." No one can lawfully make the vow of perpetual celibacy, because he cannot

^{*} The Greek airía here employed by Matthew, usually signifies accusation; and the Syriac translates it, "severity," which deserves adoption.

tell that it may not be a duty to marry. When the doctors of the church of Rome plead, that God will grant the gift of continence to fasting, mortification, and prayer; we answer, God has given us no such promise. He has, on the contrary, declared, that "Marriage is honourable in all," and that he that marries does not sin. It is not, therefore, an unreasonable dread of the evils of marriage, much less unauthorized vows, but the gift of our Creator, that must decide whether it is good for a man not to marry, or whether God has said, with his own authoritative voice, "Let him marry."

I may now consider myself as having gone through our Lord's discourse on this delicate but important subject; though he still farther enlarges, by allusions to practices, which, as they do not prevail in our country, I may leave in whatever obscurity I found them. This only I deem it necessary to say, that, as men have wickedly unfitted some for marriage, in order to make them better singers, or safer guards over the eastern harems; so our Lord applies their name to such as have merely availed themselves of a favourable constitution, to give themselves up to the service of the Gospel, called here the kingdom of heaven. Had the church of Rome confined itself to recommending such self-devotement, it would not have sinned; but when it compelled all ministers of religion to live a life of celibacy, it set at defiance the Scriptures, which show that priests under the law married; that Apostles did so; and that "bishops and deacons should be the husbands of but one wife, ruling their children and their own house well; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" Let every one judge for himself what is his duty, and his interest; and "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."

The practical application of this discourse requires two reflections.

1. Let us duly esteem the Christian law of marriage.

It demands our gratitude, for sending us back to the original institution of our Maker, when all things were pure and blissful. High and arduous as it may seem to return to

a paradisaic state, it is proportionably honourable and happy; for the second Adam thus restores to us the Eden which the first had lost. He is our best friend who elevates us to the most lofty aims, and urges us most effectively to the complete recovery of our first estate. By Christ's appeal to things as they were "from the beginning," the female is restored from the degradation which the Fall entailed upon her; and being made a fellow heir of the grace of life, is again rendered the genuine partner of man, instead of his mere slave. I would not affront thee, O man, by labouring to show how advantageous this is to thee. For what discerning or generous mind needs to be told, that the tyrannical power which man has, by brute force, assumed over woman, has degraded him more than her? In all countries where Christ's law has not reigned, it is seen that men have become vile in proportion as they have made women mean. An intelligent and pious traveller in the East Indies says, that he perceived he was coming into a Christian country, by seeing the females of the Syrian churches walking about free and happy, instead of being immured in harems, like the heathen and Mahomedan women. By this elevation of our sisters to their due rank, Christian society is adorned with a charm, and cheered with a ray, for want of which heathen companies are mean, and coarse, and cheerless, and unlovely. If it were by no other, Christ has by this one thing restored Paradise to earth, giving us to see man walking arm in arm with his Eve, as once in Eden he provoked the envy of the fallen fiend.

But this implies and requires the equity, and closeness, and durability of the marriage bond; that thoughts of separation, or divorce, be banished, and nothing be expected, but death, to part those whom God has joined together. For what did the first pair think of but union and harmony, continuance and gratitude in the enjoyment of each other's society? Marriage they knew, but divorce they never thought of; such a word was not found in the vocabulary of Paradise. To obliterate the word and the thought is the felicity of the

married pair; for they who recur to it as a remedy, and plead for it as a privilege, not only confess infelicity, but charge themselves with error in the most important step of life. They look to that as a boon, which is, at best, but a necessary evil, like the cutting off of a limb, which operation may be needful, but must be afflictive.

By teaching the married pair to regard themselves as no more two, but one flesh, who, joined by God, must not be separated by man, Christianity has shown itself the friend of woman, the weaker vessel, and not less the guardian of the peace, and happiness, and honour of man, who cannot wholly survive the degradation and separation of one-half of himself. The remedies given to the injured party against the adulterer, or deserter, are quite sufficient to secure us against the hardships inflicted by others; and Christians neither need, nor ask, license or protection for their own sins against the marriage bond.

2. Then let us cultivate such a character as will make the law of Christ pleasant, and render our duty our choice.

If "all men cannot receive these sayings," Christians must; for to them they are given. As the two sexes were made for each other, marriage, which provides for the innocent propensities of our nature, is not to be degraded as a sin, or as a misery; but is "honourable in all," a bond sanctified by its author: for God has joined us together: Like every other relation and circumstance of human life, it has its duties, its difficulties, and its trials, which morose and selfish persons may magnify, as fallen man, flying in his Maker's face, said "It was the woman that thou gavest to be with me that gave me of the forbidden fruit." But Christ, restoring us from the ruins of the Fall, creates us in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after the image of him that created us like himself; giving us back the happy temper of benevolent friendship, which made unfallen man say of his wife, "This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man."

To share the joys and sorrows of life with a companion,

diminishes the sorrows by sympathy, and augments the joys by partnership; while solitude makes sorrow more sorrowful,

and renders joy tasteless.

Christians should remember that theirs was not designed to be a solitary religion; they were called to the fellowship of saints. And while a life of celibacy often produces nothing but moroseness, where it promised calmness; if believers obey the divine command, to "marry only in the Lord," the society of husband and wife will be the communion of saints, a preparation for that which they will enjoy when they join those who "neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more, but are as the angels of God."
That the marriage life requires mutual forbearance, is not to be complained of as an evil, but to be welcomed as a profitable discipline. We are improved by all the constraints of divine grace, and made happy in proportion to our efforts to make others so. The offspring of a Christian marriage must not be regarded as an evil; for "lo, children are a heritage of the Lord." To bring up another generation for God and his church, as it is one of the most honourable and useful services in which the wise and good can be employed; so it brings with it its own reward, by preparing for us friends against that period of life when we shall say, "Lover and friend hast thou put away from me, and my acquaintance into darkness." Our own children, or our children's children, may save old age from being solitary and cheerless, or from being the prey of the selfish and designing.

But, if God has enabled and induced us to forego the comforts of marriage, that we may give ourselves entirely to the business of his kingdom, we may find in the service of the church, which is Christ's bride, more charms than in the fairest of the daughters of Eve; and in the children which we may bring to God, more honour and happiness than in the loveliest offspring that was ever born of woman.

LECTURE XXXI.

THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

Матт. хх. 1—16.

On the portal of a celebrated school of philosophy was written, "Let no one enter here who has not learned geometry." To-day, we see inscribed over the door of Christ's school, "Let him that entereth here learn to bow to God's sovereignty." Our Lord, who had, in the preceding chapter, assured Peter, that the blessings of the world to come would be bestowed as if the judge put the last first and the first last, here confirms this sovereign act, which some would call arbitrary, by a parable that demands much consideration. From the several occurrences of the day here exhibited to view, we pass speedily on to that which is the chief object of the parable, the transaction in the evening, when the sovereign disposals of the lord of the vineyard being condemned, he delivers that defence of his conduct for which the whole parable was constructed.

I. The several occurrences of the day.

Under the figure of an industrious head of a family, who went out to obtain day labourers for a vineyard, which, being the means of support to many families in Judea, required, like our harvest field, at certain seasons, additional labourers, our Saviour exhibited the conduct of God, the great Father of the human family. As the ancients were wise enough to rise with the sun, and retire early to rest, the day is here presented to us, with its whole occupation, from dawn to eve. The hire of labourers, at the different times of day, would very naturally lead us to think of the calling of individuals

into the service of God, at different periods; but as the parable evidently is designed to apply, like many others, to that which was the grand embarrassing question from the time of our Lord's incarnation, the calling of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews, I feel myself bound to give to this, its legitimate application, the first attention, though the other

legitimate application, the first attention, though the other view is perhaps to us of more practical utility.

1. Those who were hired more early in the day.

"When he had engaged with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard." A penny conveys to many a false idea, and leads them to suppose, that it could not have been an adequate remuneration for a day's labour; but it was worth about sevenpence halfpenny, and would purchase a bushel of corn, a more liberal recompense for a day's toil than is now given to our labourers. If we apply the parable to the different dispensations of religion, those who were hired in the early morning signify the servants of God in the patriarchal age, the antediluvians, who served God when the earth became generally corrupt, or those after the when the earth became generally corrupt, or those after the flood, who, like Abraham, forsook the worship of idols, and became strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Those who apply this parable to the different seasons of life, would here think of such as are called by divine grace in their earliest youth. It is an inestimable privilege, as well as sacred duty, to consecrate to God "the sweet hour of prime," and not to give to his enemy and ours the flower of our days, waiting till noon before we begin the business of the day of life. Bitter will be the regrets of the late convert, when he looks back, and sees how the half of life was spent, or wasted, or worse than wasted. But pleasant will be the fruits of early piety, when it is found that we have escaped evil habits, and polluting associations, and acquired a maturity of grace and knowledge which we look for in vain among late converts. That he who begins earliest to live for God will have the opportunity of doing most for him, is manifest; and it will be no small consolation to us, in old age, to say, like Obadiah or David, "I thy servant have feared the Lord from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."

Those who suppose this parable was intended to exhibit the different periods of conversion, observe, that as the morning was the time for hiring labourers, so those who were hired afterwards were but a few stragglers, exceptions to the general rule. Facts, indeed, prove that youth is the season for regeneration. The great mass of the church is called by grace while young; for those who in the middle or close of life, are born of God, are few indeed. For to what end are we called? Merely to save our own souls? That, I grant, might be secured by late conversion. But our religion is designed to be a blessing to others; and thus at once to put the highest honour on the Christian, and bring the greatest glory to God. As these ends are best secured by a whole life consecrated to God, he that loves us calls us by his grace in the early morning of our days.

Again, the master of the vineyard went out, about the third hour, answering to nine o'clock in the morning, and "found others standing idle in the market place," as, in the north of England, servants do, at certain seasons of the year, called the statutes, when they expect to be hired. At the sixth and ninth hour, our twelve and three o'clock, the same process was repeated. The master is not, however, said to have gone out then for the purpose of hiring labourers. The proper time for that was the morning; but, going out for other purposes, he found men standing idle, and, therefore, took them into his employ. These, if applied to the original design of the parable, must signify those who were called in subsequent dispensations, from the commencement of the Mosaic economy, down to the time of the coming of Christ. If to the different seasons of conversion we look, here are those who are called by divine grace at the age of thirty, when some younger converts have spent a fourth of their lives for God; as men hired at the third hour, or nine o'clock, begin their day's work, when others had accomplished one quarter of theirs. The labourers hired at the sixth and ninth hour, remind us of such as are converted at forty, or sixty years of age. At these periods of life, many are the hindrances that attend religion. One is engaged in secular callings, into which

he would never have plunged, if he had feared the Lord from his youth. He is now like a bird with a stone tied to its foot to prevent it from mounting to the skies. Another is married to a worldly woman, who is like a corpse bound to a living person. Late conversions, however, show that we should despair of none; for God, as a sovereign, calls when he pleases. Persons advanced in life have no reason for despair; and we have no excuse for our neglect of benevolent efforts for the conversion of men, whatever may be their character, or their age. But he who becomes a Christian thus late in the day, will perhaps imitate him who once looked a friend in the face, and, bursting into tears, said, "Ah, sir, yours has been a useful life; but as for me, I have trifled away life in doing little or nothing."

2. Those who were hired at the last hour, are the most remarkable objects.

The day being so divided by the Jews, that our Lord said, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" at the eleventh they were, of course, at the last hour. By this we are taught, that as Christ appeared "at the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" so the Gentiles were called at this late period, to faith in the Messiah, and to the worship and service of the true God. Many nations, indeed, are but now beginning to know the only true God. On their death-bed, some men are saved, being snatched as brands from the burning, and to this, the parable before us has been applied. The morning, the best season for work, was gone, and so was the middle of the day too, for the shadows of the evening began to be stretched out, before these late labourers began to work. They who really feel the power of divine grace, at the end of life, will mourn that the morning of their days, when their memory was quick and retentive, was wasted on sin; when their judgment grew maturer in the middle of life, it was occupied with earthly, not heavenly, affairs; and now that their powers are failing, and they are sinking in the grave, they begin to know for what they were created. "Life is almost gone," they cry, "and we have but just begun to live." The thief upon the cross discovered,

just as he was departing out of this world, that he was "receiving the due reward of his deeds." That some are changed by divine grace, and saved at the last hour of life, we ardently hope, or fondly believe. The Gospel says, "whosoever believeth shall be saved; for Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, them that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." We sometimes take comfort in the assurance that we see such miracles of mercy wrought. Let us not, however, forget, that though the doctrine is most true, that even at the eleventh hour, whoever believes in Christ, shall be freely forgiven all the sins of a whole life, and received to glory, through the righteousness of Christ, that justifies the ungodly; yet nothing is more difficult than to prove that this or that man was thus called and saved at the last hour. The grand evidence of a change of heart, is a holy life; and where this proof cannot be had, what can supply its place, so as to satisfy others of the reality of the change, though "the Spirit of God may bear witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God?"

II. The grand transaction at the close of the day.

For this, all the other parts of the story were introduced. Consider what is said of the conduct of God, of the censures of men, and of the triumphant defence which heaven sets up against all the censors of earth.

1. The conduct of God is exhibited in v. 8, 9.

In the evening the Lord said to his steward, "Call the la-

bourers and pay them."

God charged his people not to keep back the hire of the labourer. It is a sin of no small enormity to detain workmen late at a public-house, or till the Sabbath morning, for their pay. Here they are said to be paid in the evening, as soon as their day's work was done. But the steward is charged to begin with the last that were hired, in order that the others might see and know that these had received a penny, which was as much as had been promised to the first. Salvation, full and complete, was granted to the Gentiles, who were gathered into the church "at the end of the world;" and those who believe in Christ, however late in life, are

saved to the uttermost. All are "justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ; for there is no difference." "The same Lord over all, is rich to all that call upon him." Christ said to the penitent thief, who prayed at the last hour, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom; This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Justification is complete from the first moment we believe. It puts away all iniquity, and confers perfect righteousness, even that of Jesus Christ, which is "unto all, and upon all them that believe." The heaven of every believer will be a paradise; and as each one will be indebted to divine grace for it, so that grace will be glorified in its consummate holiness, and perfect bliss.

2. Against this were directed, the censures of men, v. 10, 11. It must be well known to those who have read the New Testament with studious care, that the grand difficulty which occurred at the setting up of the Christian church, was the relative position of Jews and Gentiles. Notwithstanding all that our Lord had taught on this subject, in his preaching, and especially in his parables, the Apostles themselves could not, at first, understand the true state of things. They had no expectation of other nations being received into the church; and when Peter employed the keys of the kingdom, to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius, the Apostle's conduct created great dissatisfaction and dissension. It was, for a long time, a question much agitated, whether the converted Gentiles should be compelled to submit to the Levitical rites, or not. But the murmuring of the Jews against the calling of the Gentiles and their salvation, without taking the yoke of the ceremonial law, was the finishing stroke of Jewish iniquity, the last drop which made their cup run over.

To this day, their minds are full of rage against the thought of the Gentiles being God's people. To show, beforehand, the state of mind that would afterwards be displayed, this parable was delivered.

But Jews are not the only persons who quarrel with the sovereign grace of God. Too many, alas! who call them-

selves Christians, are exceedingly shocked with what we have said; that, however late in life a man believes in Christ, he shall be freely justified, and received into heaven, as well as those who have been religious all their days. "What are we the better then, for giving ourselves so much trouble with religion all through life?" they exclaim. Trouble! If this is your idea of religion, you have your religion yet to acquire. If you knew the grace of God in truth, you would say, "It has been my joy and my glory to have served God all my days." Others, however, professing to be alarmed for the interest of morality, say, "It is most licentious in its tendency, to affirm that a man who has spent all his life in sin, should be saved at last." "What, then," we ask, "would you wish that he who has lived in sin, should die in the hardened horrors of despair? Would this promote the cause of morals, rather than to hear one who has been cheered by the promise of the Gospel, say, 'Can there be hope for a wretch like me? Is it possible that one who has provoked God by a life of sin, should find mercy at last? Then how vile has been my enmity to such a God! Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, what pangs I feel, that I cannot now devote my life to show forth thy praise?"

But some would almost persuade us that they are more alive to the honour of the Redeemer's character than he is himself. "It is," say they, "representing Christ as the minister of sin, to affirm that he will allow any to close a life of iniquity, with a death of pardon, and peace, and hope of heaven." But, when I hear the prayer of the dying thief, answered by my Lord with a promise of paradise, I see no blushes for his character. I hear no apology for his own conduct, and discover no anxiety to guard his grace from reflection or abuse. The Saviour died as he lived, showing that "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." But I conceive it possible that my Lord may have had in view, not only persons, but principles; and that he designed to obviate the doubts, and fears, and unbelieving reasonings of those who are converted late in life. I admit

that some very injudiciously express their assurance of the salvation of such as are called at the eleventh hour. But these late converts are often made to feel, that their sin has brought with it its own punishment; for they can scarcely believe it possible that the last worn out end of life can be accepted. Such fears are increased by hearing their fellow-creatures murmur against the doctrine that administers hope to the eleventh hour.

3. The defence of God's sovereign grace against the censures of men: v. 13—16.

When the lord of the vineyard says, "Friend," he answers him according to his profession; though we cannot suppose that any real friend of God would blame his mercy to others. Yet some, through a strange mistake, approach too near to this error. "I do thee no wrong. Didst not thou agree with me for a penny?" says the lord of the vineyard. Consider the sovereignty of God, that he does as he pleases,—" May I not do what I will with my own?" Look around this vast creation, with a discerning and truly philosophic eye, that is, with the eye of a Christian philosopher; and do you not see that God acts as a sovereign? How many things has he done, for which we can give no other account than that "so it seemed good in his sight!" What various orders of existence we behold, from the particle of inanimate matter, to the highborn seraph before his throne! Animated, but non-intelligent creatures abound, from the mite to the whale, or the mammoth. Among intellectual beings, there are all varieties, from the brightest of human geniuses, and the loftiest of angelic spirits, to the drivelling idiot, the sport of boys in the streets! But to men, how variously has the Creator dealt out his favours! How highly are some privileged! How melancholy are the disadvantages of others! What account can be given of this, but that which Christ gave, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight?" This is what is meant by sovereignty. When our king exercises his mere will, he is a sovereign; when he executes the laws, he is the executive magistrate: but if in the latter capacity he inflicts punishments; the sovereign confers only favours. The royal will is exercised, only in the way of mercy, to grant pardons; for punishment is alway executed according to the sentence of law. God here exercises his sovereign will in granting a day's wages to those who had wrought only one hour.

The equity of God, that he does as he will with his own, is

next asserted.

Should any one give away, according to his own will, that which is another's, he might justly be censured as violating equity. But as God restricts himself, in the exercise of his sovereignty, to that which is strictly his own, to which no one has any claim, he maintains equity inviolate. In giving being to creatures, he manifestly deals with that which is his own. He is the only fountain of existence; no one can have any claim to be called into being. Before we exist we are nothing, and that which is nothing has nothing, has no rights of any kind; and therefore can neither claim existence at all, nor any particular kind, or degree, or rank of being. Whether, therefore, God leaves those that might exist, in their original nonentity; or whether he places them in any particular class, however low, he does as he pleases, and acts the sovereign with that which is his own. But when he places us in any order of beings, he deals with us in perfect equity. He never refuses to us that which we could claim; and it will be found at last, that equity sat upon the throne, judging righteously; he loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity, the sceptre of his kingdom is a right, straight, or righteous sceptre. If we have sinned, and need mercy, he deals out this, like a king, where he pleases. For what can be more his own than his mercy? If this is not his own, to do with as he pleases, what is? The guilty that have forfeited their lives, have lost all, and can claim nothing; and therefore, whatever they receive, they must owe to mercy. If he says, he "has mercy on whom he will have mercy," this is doing what he will with his own. "It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

If he regenerate, and convert a depraved, alienated mind, he does as he pleases, "quickening whom he will," when he will, how he will, and "giveth no account of these matters."

But he deals thus with his own. What can be more his own, than the breath of his quickening Spirit, which is said to "breathe where it pleases?" We see there is a sovereignty about it; we cannot account for the conversion of one, rather than another. As for the time of it, whether it be in early life, or in middle life, or on a death-bed, or in the last agonies of a thief on the cross, this, also, is according to sovereign pleasure. God gives heaven to one who has served him all his life, and the same heaven to another who has but just been plucked as a brand from the burning. But heaven is his own. Who could claim it? Who has deserved it? Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Then, if it be his own, not ours, he surely may give it as he pleases.

Learn, then, the *iniquity* of all *objections* to sovereignty,—"Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

The objectors had "murmured against the good man of the house," as if he had done evil. But he justly said, "Friend," I do thee no wrong: thou agreedst with me for a penny, and here it is; take what is thine own, and go thy way." Thus we are taught the true mode of answering objectors. Look at those who are supposed not to be favoured by sovereignty; and if you find fault with this doctrine, ask what harm has sovereignty done them? Look at the non-elect, and say what injury has election done them? Are they deprived of what was theirs? Are they denied any thing they can claim? If, then, they can prove no wrong done to them, or any one; to find fault with the master for doing what he pleases with his own, is the effect of an evil eye, that is, an envious eye. But who can stand before envy? it is asked. Yet who can defend it? Is it not evil? Can any one justify it? Who does not see that, as it is exhibited in the parable, it is an evil eye? In common life, we condemn envy as an odious thing. The Scripture saith not in vain, "there is a spirit in man that lusteth to envy;" so that we are all exposed to the workings of it. "Out of the heart proceedeth blasphemy, fornication, an evil eye; all these things come from within, and defile a man." All who watch over their

own hearts, struggle against this evil, and when they feel its workings, condemn themselves for a disposition so vile, and seek deliverance both from its guilt and power. But how evil is it to envy God his rights! How vile to look at him with an evil eye! How unjust are all the cavils against his sovereignty! How dangerous to indulge in them! And yet, how common, loud, and general are the murmurings which this parable was designed at once to exhibit and to silence! There is no part of God's character, or conduct, more generally viewed with an evil eye, than his sovereignty, as displayed in the election of grace, showing mercy to whom he pleases, and granting eternal life as that which is not ours to claim, but his own to give.

The goodness of God is seen triumphant over the cavils of men. The master said, "I will give unto this last, even as unto thee."

It was, then, the gratuitous kindness of the Lord that gave offence. But how vile to murmur at goodness! Who does not despise and hate envy; for this reason, because it fastens upon excellence to tear it in pieces? Infernal are those fires that are inflamed by the sight of superior worth. Our Lord designed to teach the Jews that their quarrel with God for calling the Gentiles, after Israel had for ages confessed his name, was the effect of an evil mind; but I have dwelt chiefly on the same depraved principle, when directed against the sovereign mercy which calls some late in life. For it is in this form that we are most in danger of indulging the evil eye. We have no quarrel with God for calling us Gentiles; but the evil temper of the Jews was nothing more than one of the modifications of our common depravity, against which we should watch with jealous care.

But if some murmured against the master, did none defend him? And of whom might this be expected, but of those who profited by his sovereign goodness? Would not their gratitude be roused to surround him with praises that should neutralize the unreasonable censures to which he was exposed? What, then, should be the conduct of those who owe so much as many of us do, to the unmerited grace of God? Are we not

bound, by every tender and mighty motive, to defend the doctrine of the grace of God? If he has chosen to display this towards the chief of sinners, and we find ourselves among them, should we not be anxious that eventually he should receive nothing but glory in our salvation?

But how shall we effect this? Not merely by logic, or eloquence; but by practice, by sanctity of heart and life, and by zealous imitation of our great benefactor. Let it be manifest that "the grace of God teacheth us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world," and we shall blunt the edge of those censures, so fiercely dealt out against the grace that saves us. Especially, let us be careful to obey the voice that says, "freely ye have received, freely give." By the tenderness of our compassion towards the guilty, and the charity that "beareth long, and is kind," we should prove that the conduct of God, even when most censured, is in its effects, which speak its nature, most holy.

The preacher cannot, however, close, without another effort to reconcile to this doctrine of sovereignty those who reject it, as odious. If, then, it is undeniable that the mercy and grace of God are most emphatically his own, to be dealt out as he pleases, is it not reasonable and equitable to confess it, not merely with a cold consent of the judgment, but with a cordial submission of the will? To confess that God may, with the highest propriety, do as he pleases with us, to save, or destroy, is, indeed, the lowest step of humiliation to which a convinced sinner can be reduced; but it is always the next step to exaltation by divine mercy. Sovereign grace saves the soul that bows to it. It may appear strange that the verge of despair should be within a step of the portal of mercy; but God has said it, and thousands have found its truth,—"humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and he shall exalt you in due time." There is in the very act of resigning ourselves up to this high claim of the Sovereign, a pacifying influence, which is the dawn of hope, the commencement of "rejoicing in Christ Jesus, without confidence in the flesh."

LECTURE XXXII.

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN POUNDS.

LUKE XIX. 11-27.

The egregious mistakes and fallacious hopes generated by our vanity and love of the world, expose us to agonizing disappointments, when the fidelity of heaven dispels our golden dream of a paradise on earth. Our Lord was now advancing rapidly on his last journey to Jerusalem, working miracles all the way, and thus attracting crowds, who followed him for the loaves and fishes, foolishly expecting that he would march to his capital in triumph, and take possession of David's royal throne. But far different was the scene that followed. He entered the sacred city, not in a triumphal chariot, but riding on an ass; not exulting in empire, but weeping over an approaching ruin; ascending, not to a throne, but to a cross; going, not to take a kingdom on this earth, but to be driven out of the world, and to remove to a far distant region; and many a long and dreary year would roll away, ere he should return, having received a kingdom. For this disappointment, therefore, he prepares men by a discourse, painfully, but kindly, faithful; and with it, as a magic wand, he touches their castles in the air, they vanish, and leave behind the sombre prospect which we have now to contemplate.

I. The present state of our Lord and his militant kingdom are shown: v. 12-14.

To those who are unacquainted with Jewish history, this parable must appear wanting in verisimilitude; for we know nothing of a nobleman going to a far country to receive a kingdom, and to return. But the Jews did; for to receive the sovereignty of Judea, Herod went to Rome, to the king-makers

who there ruled and gave away crowns and sceptres as they pleased. The title of king, was by the senate, at the instance of Marc Antony, conferred upon the aspiring Edomite. At his death, Archelaus, his son, took a journey to the imperial city, on the same errand; but his character for cruelty, which made the parents of our Lord, on their return from Egypt, afraid to settle in Judea, induced the Jews to send an embassy of fifty persons, to request that they might be permitted to live under Roman governors, rather than have him for a king. The son of Herod, however, obtained the kingdom. Let us now consider,

1. The Lord of the heavenly kingdom. "A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom."

Christ compares himself to a nobleman, or one well born as the evangelist expresses it; for if those who are descended from kings are considered born to empire, how much more Christ! As a man, he reckons in his genealogy twenty kings and princes; for not only Mary, his real mother, but Joseph his reputed father, descended from a royal stock; though, when this rod from the stem of Jesse sprang up, the princely tree had been cut down to the stump, leaving little more than the root in the earth. Born of a royal virgin, by an immaculate birth, he had still higher claims to empire; for he was divine; the Son of God, in all the emphasis of that most singular expression. Angels could not vie with him, in nature or in rank. "To which of the angels said he, at any time, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee?" "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

But he whose residence ennobled this earth is gone, gone to a far country. The world that was not worthy of him cast him out, and he returned to the Father who sent him, to the throne on the everlasting hills, "far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come." No eye, however far-sighted, can cast a glance half way to him; no optic glass, though it could lay open to view the Georgian planet and its moons, can reach the utmost extremity of his imperial domain; nor can the loftiest angel, with his strongest pinions,

scale the height of his seat; or thought itself, with more than angel wing, rise to the place of him "who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." There a kingdom is given to him; for the prophet says, "I saw him come in the clouds of heaven and take the throne." "Sit at my right hand," the eternal Father says, "till I make thine enemies thy footstool. Ask and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." There he sits, "from henceforth expecting until all his enemies be made his footstool."

But the hour is coming, the moment draws near, for the decree has been recorded, that he shall return. Yes; though he has gone far, he has not gone for ever. The gates that opened to receive him, and shut him in with his glory, till the times of the restitution of all things, shall open to restore him to the delighted gaze of those who look for him. The giddy height up which he soared, surrounded with his angel guards, shall again be crowded with the bright retinue attending him downward from the skies. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" said the angels; "this same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He comes, having received the kingdom; "for hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

2. His professed servants he has left on earth.

For if you ask, "Has he, ascending to brighter, loftier worlds, laid aside all thoughts of this?" I answer, No. Ere he went, he called his servants and made arrangements with them till he should return. Servants of Christ is the title of Christians, and the highest style of mortals. An Apostle writes himself down thus, "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ." Do we aspire to share the honour with Apostles and prophets, professing to have believed on his name, and devoted ourselves to his service? What does it imply? What deference to our Lord's will! What consecration to his service! What interest in his work! What responsibility to his throne! What reckoning with him when he shall return!

For to these he delivered ten pounds, according to the number of his servants, who may be thus reckoned by the decimal, to signify their vast number. Numerous are the servants of our Lord; for he is a great householder. Though my vanity may swell, when reckoning myself among them, I am but one among many myriads. Rather let me think of my trust, when I hear him say, "Occupy till I come; do business for me, with my property, in constant expectation of accounting to me at my coming."

In the parable of the talents, this man received five, that two, and the last one, to signify the varied gifts bestowed on men; but here each one receives alike, a pound.* Because, if there are some things in which we differ from each other, in others we are all on a level. We have all the same fallen human nature, the same mortality, the same accountability; there are to us all but twenty-four hours in a day, but threescore years and ten to live upon the earth; we are all under the necessity of sleeping, eating, and drinking; we have all similar limits to our bodily powers, and, in some respects, to our mental faculties. But, above all, we have one soul, one Christ, one Gospel, one bible, one testimony to bear upon the earth, one business to do, one Lord to serve, one judgment to meet, and one heaven to enjoy. The differences between a man and his brother disappear from the height of the eternal throne, as the loftiest mountains vanish from the view of those who ascend into the air.

But we must make our Lord's money work; and, therefore, we must work. For we might render his words, "be busy." What! if we are rich and retired from business, and have no occasion to work for our bread? Yes, if we have no master on earth, and no occasion to work for ourselves, we have a master in heaven, who has said to us, "busy yourselves." No man, however rich, is sent here to idle away his life; to eat, and drink, and sleep, and die. The very wealth that we possess was his gift, or rather his deposit, intrusted to our use; and the more we have of it, the more we must do with

it. That was a wise man, who, being already rich, and hearing that a large accession was made to his property, by the death of a relative, burst into tears, and exclaimed, "I hope God will give me no more property, without giving me a heart to improve it." For, what though God needs not our trading with his money, to enrich him; we need it for our own success; our brother needs it for his relief; the church needs it for its improvement; the world needs it for its conversion. Many of the richest men lead the most laborious, and, in some respects, the most useful lives; some prompted by mere mental activity; some, by an inferior sense of their obligations to society; and Christians, by a consciousness, that, as Christ's servants, having had much given them, much will be required.

But all are not of this mind; for we have to turn to,

3. His avowed enemies.

The citizens of this nobleman hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying, "We do not wish to have this man to reign over us." We have seen this literally fulfilled in the son of Herod. But it is still more awfully, because mentally, exemplified in the Son of God. Christ "came to his own, and his own citizens received him not;" but he said, "Ye have both seen and hated me and my Father." They "denied him in the presence of Pilate," and said, "We have no king but Cæsar." Let us not, however, spend our censures on them, but reserve them for those who claim now to be called his citizens, reckoning themselves Christians. Do they, then, hate him? Yes, every one that is still under the influence of the carnal mind; for it is "enmity against God." " Many walk of whom I have told you often; and now tell you, even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ." This is so fearful a crime, that few will own it. For it is to hate him that is altogether lovely; it is to hate him whom the Father loves, so as to give all things into his hands; it is to hate him who so "loved us as to give himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour;" it is to hate him without a cause. But Jesus does not charge this upon us without a cause. For are there not many lovers of the world? And "whosoever will be a friend of the

world is an enemy of God." Are there no lovers of sin which crucified him? Are there none who, by substituting their own righteousness for his, attempt to tear the crown from his brow? And is not this the act of one inimical to a redeeming Lord? Are there none who hate his image, where they see it in others, and persecute his disciples, just in proportion as they are like him, and live for him? From what can these bitter fruits grow, but from the poison tree of enmity to Christ?

enmity to Christ?

They "sent after him," therefore, as the Jews did, by their hostility and persecution of the Apostles and first Christians, after Christ's death, and said, "We do not wish this man to reign over us." They were warned, that "God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ;" but the Apostles, beaten and expelled from their councils, being let go, returned to their own company, and lifted up their voice with one accord, saying, "Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, who by the mouth of thy servant hast said, The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were cathered together against the Lord and his the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and his Christ."

Christ."

Does Christ reign by consent, even over all that call themselves Christians? Is it not manifest, that multitudes are under any sceptre but his; obey any law but the Scriptures; are subjects of any kingdom but that which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? How few comparatively are under his holy and blessed sway! And what is the cause? Can any other be assigned than "they will not?" Has he intimated his sovereign pleasure to exclude them from his dominion, saying, "I will not reign over you?" Tell us, what nation, what tribe, what family, what individual he has put under the ban of his empire, declaring "I have outlawed that people, those individuals, and will not reign over them?" Has he not sent forth his proclamation to all people, languages, and tongues, saying, "All power in heaven and earth is given to me; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, and preach the glad tidings to every creature?" If, then, it is not because he will not, it must be because they

will not. It is a pure affair of the will. He rules, when we are willing to be ruled. If he sways our inclinations, his dominion is established, he has gained the citadel of the heart, and every thing else follows. When he rules, he saves; it is the dominion of a Saviour; and his subjects that are taken under the rod of his authority, are placed under the shadow of his cross; and the world, and sin, and death lie vanguished at their feet. Then, why will they not have him to rule over them? What harm would his government do them? If his sceptre crushes their sins, these are their foes; if his law is written in their hearts, it is love, it is bliss; if because he reigns, they serve, to serve him is to reign; if they must take their part in the battles of his militant state, they shall share in the victory too, they shall reap the spoils, they shall wear the crown. Then, why will they not? They say, "Our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us? We will be our own masters." If this were true, are they better masters to themselves than he would be to them? Does he not love us better than we love ourselves, and intend better things for us than we have been able even to conceive for ourselves? But it is not true, that by rejecting his reign, they rule themselves; for their lusts rule them; while promising themselves liberty, they are the servants of corruption, for "of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage." Satan rules whom Christ does not. The fallen spirit is god of this world; so that Christians say, "We know we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Choose ye, then, this day, whom ye will serve, Christ or Satan; the Saviour or the Destroyer; the fiend of hell, the monster of malignity, the prodigy of misery; or the king of heaven, the friend of sinners, the beloved of heaven, the "God over all blessed for ever."

That your choice may be happily determined, and irrevocably fixed, consider now,

II. The approaching state of our Lord, in his triumphant kingdom.

"And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that

he might know how much every man had gained by trading."

For though the mockers say, "Where is the promise of his coming? he will come, and convict all the ungodly of their hard speeches. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but that word which he spake concerning the last judgment, and which his prophets and Apostles have published, shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." But he comes, to reckon, both with the church, and with the world; with pretended friends and avowed foes; to make a final settlement of the affairs of his moral government. So that we have to divide our attention to three classes.

1. The diligent servants of Christ.

I might subdivide these, again, into more and less faithful; but our Lord makes so little difference, that I shall not attempt to widen the distinction. He commences with his servants, since judgment must begin at the house of God; and all the descriptions of the last day, inform us, that the right-eous will first be judged and received to glory, that they may sit with their Lord, and with him judge the world. "Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound has gained ten pounds." He does not say, "it is my diligence, or skill, that has made this gain;" for the truly pious ascribe nothing to themselves. He says, "it is thy pound, that has gained this;" "Not I," says the Apostle, "but the grace of God that was with me." By this, he had increased his stock ten-fold. Can you not, my dear friends, recall a case in point; some happy instance of this diligence and increase? Have you not in your eye, a person who commenced the Christian life, with no remarkable appearance of talent, with very humble means of usefulness, in a limited sphere of action, amidst a thousand discouragements? But he set his heart on walking closely with God, which is the spring of all real advancement; he turned every moment to account, and to improve time is to improve every thing. He therefore grew in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; he made every faculty work, as far as it could. Thus he acquired influence over others; for this always follows upon

eminent virtue and industry; he made each acquisition a step to a further; he thought nothing done, while any thing remained to be done; thinking still of his deficiencies, he was not arrested in the midst of his career by that bane of all improvement, conceit; and he ended life, having done ten times as much as it seemed, at first, possible for him to do. Such is the man before us.

And what is his reward? His Lord's approving smile, the transporting sentence, "Well, thou good servant." When we think of our account, at the last day, and reflecting on our unfaithfulness, scarcely dare to indulge the hope of more than mere acceptance; to suppose that we should hear the words, "Well, thou good servant," seems to ravish us to the third heavens. In one moment, all our labours and afflictions will be overpaid, and that will be the moment when this sentence falls on our ears. "Thou hast been faithful in a very little," says our Lord; for our best talents here, are little compared with what God will bestow upon us hereafter. Our business is not to insist upon great abilities, but to see that, when our Lord comes, he shall say, "Thou hast been faithful in the least."

The reward is expressed in singular terms, derived from customs foreign from ours, and therefore requiring some illustration: "Be thou ruler over ten cities." The master, who was, at first, but nobly born, going out, gave his servants money; but when he returned, having received a kingdom, he gave cities, to be ruled and enjoyed. For the Roman biographer says, "Artaxerxes, king of Persia, gave Themistocles the city of Magnesia, observing, 'It will furnish you with bread." In the parable, he that improved a pound, to gain ten, was rewarded with the dominion and revenue of ten cities. We have seen such reward bestowed. even in this life, on exemplary diligence. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men." Some, called, like Cincinnatus, from the plough, to the helm of government, have accomplished as much in one of their latter days, as in some of their former years. To a man who has a talent, and a heart for usefulness, what reward can be so gratifying? But, in the future world, it seems that God will reward those who have been diligent here, with trusts and employments, as well as honours; and that in fact, honours there will arise from usefulness. And why should we be slow to believe this? If any look for a heaven of indolence, these are not Christ's servants; for they have learned to regard idleness as most fatiguing, and to receive the sweetest refreshment from the full tension of their powers, and their utmost employment in the service of Christ. Matthew Henry, who, by his exposition, has done such service for God in the church, used to pray for a head full of schemes, hands full of work, and a heart full of love for God. "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren," and he said, "O that thou wouldest enlarge my coast; and God gave him that which he requested." In the world to come, there doubtless will be modes of serving, as well as enjoying, God, of which we can here form no conception. It is written, that in the heavenly city, they have their Father's name on their forehead, and his servants serve him. Glorified saints may rule in distant orbs, and the talent and habit of exertion, which became their element here, may there be their rich reward. Who can suppose, that, after forming our character on the model of Christ's, who was all life and exertion, he will give us a heaven like the dead stagnant lake of Sodom; or cause us to spend eternity like a snail, when he has taught us to spend life like a seraph? Worship and adoration will, indeed, be our bliss; but so they were to Christ, while he filled this region with actions so numerous, so various, and so mighty, that the world could not contain their records. Angels who see our Father's face and adore him continually, minister to the saints, and "do the commandments of the Lord, hearkening to the voice of his word."

The other faithful servant said, "Lord, thy pound has gained five pounds;" and though he had done only half as much as the first, (for even real Christians differ exceedingly in their fruitfulness,) he is not reproached, but is set over five cities. All Christ's real servants shall find mercy at the last day, shall be blessed, shall be promoted to honour. But can

we come to any other conclusion, from this grant of five cities, instead of ten, than that there will be degrees of glory? It is both true and important, that we cannot learn doctrines from the mere drapery of parables, which are designed to teach some *one* truth, with which they usually close. But this difference of reward, according to the various degrees of diligence and fidelity in the use of the talents committed to us, seems to be the truth for which this whole parable was constructed. And is not this doctrine in accordance with the whole plan of God's government? Variety in harmony constitutes the beauty of the universe. Where can we look and not see our Creator diversifying his works almost to infinity? Living beings differ in size and forms, from the animalcula, invisible to the naked eye, to the elephant or the condor; and in nature, from the slug that scarcely crawls, to the lark that soars to the clouds, singing as it mounts. Plants are varied, from the liver-wort that seems a part of the stone on which it grows, to the gorgeous flower that transports us with its splendid forms and colours, and eclipses Solomon in all his glory. Men differ in rank and talent, in bodily powers and mental endowments, from him that is scarcely above an idiot, to a Milton that sings of angels in angelic strains, or a Whitefield that flies through the world, preaching the everlasting Gospel. Among angels, all are not of one order; for there are thrones and dominions, principalities and powers. Can we, then, suppose that glorified men, made perfect, will exhibit a dull uniformity of rank, of talent, of employment, and of bliss? If the church is the nursery for heaven, "are we all apostles, all prophets, all workers of miracles? Has not God set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues? All these worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The differences in future glory seem the natural and almost necessary consequences of the diversity in grace. This will create no dissatisfaction, no envy, no discord. In proportion as we are holy, we now approve of the varied gifts of God. Our eye is not evil because he is good. We see the superiority of angels; and though we are "made a little lower" than they, we envy not, but positively enjoy their superior bliss. When we shall all be blessed far beyond our deserts, we shall not only be satisfied with our own rank, but thankful for the superior elevation bestowed on others, and delighted to find that the variety is productive of superior moral beauty, and that the diversity of the voices improves the harmony of the universal song.

2. The faithless professor, however, is presented to our view. He is called a servant, because he assumed that rank, and is treated accordingly; though all his conduct, and all his words, proclaim him of a different spirit. Here we may, by the way, observe, that there is only one such among ten. O that we could conclude, that this is the proportion of faithless pretenders to the real servants of Christ! But what was his fault? That he squandered his lord's pound in riotous living? No; to all such accusations he might plead that he had done nothing. But doing nothing was his crime. "Lord, here is thy pound, which I have kept wrapt up in a napkin." He hoarded his money, instead of laying it out usefully. He passed his time, not in positive wickedness, but in indolence.

What, then, is his excuse? I will not say his reason. Hear him: "I feared thee." But is not "the fear of God the beginning of wisdom?" Yes; but it is added, "a good understanding have all they that keep his commandments." Thus we are taught that there are two very different kinds of fear; and that the one which this man felt was so far from being religious, that it was a sin. It was that of which the Apostle says, "God has not given us the spirit of fear." "The fear that has torment," the dread of God that paralyses exertion, is so far from entering into the elements of religion, that it is a decisive mark of the total absence of that divine principle. For see how insolently he accuses his lord; "thou art an austere man." This is the effect of the carnal mind that is enmity against God, that conceives him to be morose, awful, unlovely, in spite of the infinite proof that he has given, that "God is love." O see that ye be reconciled to God by viewing him in Christ, reconciling the world to

himself, removing all suspicion of austerity, condescending to our infirmity, throwing himself into our bosom, and winning us by love! But this wicked man accused his lord of "taking up what he had not laid down, and reaping what he had not sown." "The ways of the Lord are not equal," said the rebellious Jews. With these thoughts of God, the faithless servant was deterred from doing the very thing which, had he been sincere, he would have done, to satisfy such a lord.
"Thou wicked servant!" What! call him a wicked

servant who did nothing? Is not this deemed by many perfect innocence? Is it not the shield under which they hide themselves at the close of life, saying, "I have done nothing to make me afraid?" Yes; and, therefore, our Redeemer in mercy framed this parable, to undeceive them. For when a person is placed in the situation of a servant, and furnished with a capital, and commanded to be busy in trade, for his master's interest, to do nothing is to do wickedly. The

good Lord convince us of the sin of doing nothing!

"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee;" dropping all mention of his original orders, and confining his attention to the accusation brought against him. "Thou knewest that I was an austere man, claiming what was not mine." Observe how he repeats the wicked speech. For he knows all the hard things that men say against him; though they "consider not in their hearts, that he remembers all their wickedness;" and he is not afraid to republish it before the world, for he knows well how to meet it. "Wherefore, then, hast thou not put my money into the bank, that, at my coming, I might have received my own with usury? If thou wast afraid to trade with my pound, lest by the hazards of commerce it should be lost, and I should severely have demanded it of thee, yet there was the safer way of interest;" for what we render usury, an odious word, expressive of excessive gain, signifies merely lawful interest, which is simple justice; for when one man furnishes the capital for another's trade, it is just that each party should share in the profit. Thus the owner would have received, not only his own pound, which he laid down as the seed, but that which he laid not down,

the increase by interest. To this the accuser of his lord said not a word. Out of his own mouth he was condemned; for thou, O God, "wilt be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Every mouth will be stopped, and all the world stand guilty before God." O let us now abandon our murmurings, our foolish excuses of ourselves, and our false accusations of God; for what will they avail us at last?

The sentence of the judge, however, demands special notice; for it was very singular. "Take from him the pound." "From him that hath, as if he had not (of what use is a pound laid up in a napkin?) shall be taken that which he had" to no purpose. Have we never known talents disappear by disuse, like camphor lying in the open air, till there was none left? "Woe to the idol shepherd, that leaveth the flock; the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." Indolence has so withered some men's powers, that their former acquaintances scarcely knew them again. Afraid of wearing out, they have rusted out; and though use would have kept them bright, disuse has deformed and consumed them, as iron left to rest on the ground. Do not be alarmed, lest you should overload your memory by treasuring up truth, or weaken your faculties by labour; for there is far more danger of losing your memory, by not employing it, and arriving at fatuity by want of mental effort.

He that should suffer his body to lie idle in bed day after day, would, at length, be unable to rise and walk, much more to work; nor is this less true of him who keeps his mind inactive, for it is by exercise that we maintain and increase, both

our physical, and our mental, or moral strength.

But when the lord said, "Take from him the pound," he did not add, "give it me;" for he needed it not, but said, "Give it to another; all my aim is to employ and improve my servants, that I may reward their diligence." Give it to whom? "To him that has ten pounds;" which seemed so strange to those who stood by, that they said, "Lord, he hath ten pounds already;" as if they would make the diligence which had

enriched him a reason for shutting him out from all further marks of his lord's favour; and would have rewarded another for not having gained so much. Not so, however, did our Lord reason; "to him that hath to good purpose, shall be given the pound of the slothful servant. The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." To the apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, Matthias is advanced. Even in the world, the industrious and careful are continually rising to the comforts and usefulness which the indolent lose; but in the church, the faithful continually put out the faithless; and, in heaven, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and laborious servants of Christ will rise to occupy the thrones left vacant by Satan and his apostate host.

3. The determined foes were last judged: v. 27.

This alludes to the conduct of Archelaus, who cruelly avenged himself on the Jews for requesting that he might not be made king, But what judgments overtook the nation that said, "We have no king but Cæsar!" To Cæsar they were abandoned; and he crushed them with his iron mace, destroying their city and their state. "So shall all thine enemies perish, O Lord."

But do not mistake this whole parable, by supposing that it teaches salvation by works. It shows how Christ deals with his servants, whether they are such by mere profession, or in reality; but the way in which we become his servants is taught in other texts. There we learn that "we are saved by grace through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." But when we have obtained salvation, as a pure gratuitous favour, by believing in the Son of God for righteousness, it is added, "Ye are his work, created in Christ Jesus, to good works, that God has before ordained that ye should walk in them." Disciples and servants of Christ are always coupled as correlates. Christ saves us, that he may employ us, and thus, at last, reward us. Ye serve the Lord Christ-no austere master, but a generous Lord. Look with confidence and joy to his coming in the glory of the kingdom which he has received; for then shall you also "reign with him."

LECTURE XXXIII.

THE FATHER AND HIS TWO SONS.

MATT. xxi. 28-33.

WE are evidently sent into this world as to a school, where we may learn the difference between appearances and reality. For we are surrounded, on every hand, by things that are not what they seem to be. The sun appears to rise and move around us, and the earth to stand still; but we discover, by the aids of science and reflection, that it is the earth which moves, and the sun remains fixed in the centre. In childhood we suppose that we are on the earth's uppermost surface, so that, if there were any persons on the other side, they must be in danger of falling off, though we afterwards discover that upper and under are but relative terms. In winter, judging from appearances, we should conclude that the trees are dead, fit only for the fire. Experience, however, has taught us to think otherwise; and when spring returns, we do not expect that its blossoms will produce all the fruits that we might otherwise have hoped to enjoy.

In the moral world, too, we are deceived by appearances; and, unhappily, here we are more slow to learn the truth. At the first glance we cast upon characters, we fear that those who make no profession of religion will be lost, but hope that all who profess piety will be saved. We at last learn, however, that much of what appears to be wheat is mere chaff, and that among heaps of chaff, there are some grains of wheat; that "there are first that shall be last, and last that shall be first." As we are delightfully surprised by disco-

vering a most happy change in those whose case appeared desperate, so we are mortified to find the fairest appearances end in cruel disappointment. Too many have abused this discovery, to arrive at the conclusion that all profession is hypocritical; but the Searcher of hearts here shows that this sweeping censure is not just, and that there are those who really "do the will of our Father in heaven." Nothing surprises the young convert more than his own change of views concerning the characters of men; and to lead us into just conclusions on this subject, our Lord uttered this parable, which is remarkable for its simple brevity, and for its direct, irresistible appeal to the judgment and conscience. It is a pair of portraits, and we see in it,

I. A picture of open profaneness followed by sincere practical repentance; v. 28—29.

Many things might here be said of the paternal relation of God, and of the different characters of men, who are his children by creation. Some are more impudently rebellious, and others more fair and decent, though insincere. All are originally rebels, while some make fair pretences to obedience. God has a claim upon the services of all, though he urges it in tones of parental kindness, "speaking to us as to sons." Religion is a practical affair, which says, "go work," for the service is urgent, calling us, "to-day to hear his voice." All this, however, I omit, that I may fasten upon the two great truths which our Lord designed to impress. See, then,

1. The insolent triumph of sin over the just authority of God. The father said to the first son, "Go work;" and he said, "I will not," or, "I do not choose."

That such a command should meet with such an answer, might justly astonish us. God himself speaks as if he were astonished, saying, "Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord." When we come to you, like Ehud, saying, "I have a message from God to you; Son, go work to day, in my vineyard;" we are not, indeed, rudely interrupted by a clamour of voices,

calling out, "I will not, and I will not;" and when, in private, we urge the divine command, we are not shocked with any thing so repulsive as a direct negative, "That I will not." But are we not met with a real refusal of the heart? Do not many put us off with excuses? If these do not to our ear sound as direct negatives, to what else do they amount when they reach the ear of God? Is he to be deceived by polite refusals that seem almost as fair as acceptances? Ah, with what force he entreats, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!" He says nothing about to-morrow. Even to our ear, the answer we get sounds like, "I had rather not." Tell us, if you can, how much better this is than "I will not!" Do those who put us off, deceive even themselves by this masked refusal? Do they not know, that it is but like the answer of Felix, "Go thy way for the present, and when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee." That season never came. For when God says, "Go work to-day;" and we reply, "To-morrow;" is it not saying, "I will not to-day?" Did he send any message to us about to-morrow? Is not, then, our consent for to-morrow, if we really mean it, accepting proposals that he never made, and refusing a message which he really did send? If your house were on fire, and you sent to your neighbour to help you to put it out, and he were to send word that he would come to-morrow, would you not take it for a direct negative? May I not appeal to your own consciences, that the true reason why you are not willing to receive Christ to-day, is because you are not willing to receive him at all? If you were well disposed for to-morrow, you would not be unwilling to-day.

Such was the sin by which the son insulted his father; and who does not blush to hear such a reply, "I will not?" If the first of human duties is to obey our parents, so that God has said, "He that curseth father or mother let him die the death;" are we not much rather bound to obey the Father of our spirits? What, though we refuse him as decently and politely as possible? Is not this adding mockery to rebellion, and the sin of hypocrisy to that of disobedience? If any ask us, What would you have us to do? Would you wish that we

should nakedly refuse? Certainly not. If, then, you say, What can we do? We answer, "Obey the voice of God; refuse not him that speaketh," for there is no way of refusing him that can be tolerable, and nothing can set us right but compliance. Yet, such is the strange perversion of the human heart, on religious subjects, that some parade it as a sort of merit, that they make no profession of religion; just as this son made no profession of obeying his father. But what would you say, on expostulating with a liar, were he to reply, "I make no profession of speaking the truth?" Or what would you think of one who having wronged you, were to make this his excuse, "I do not profess to be honest?" If your rebellion has not the sin of hypocrisy added to it, it has the guilt of openly insulting the sovereign Lord, by telling him to his face, "I will not." If Satan, transformed to an angel of light, is more mischievous; it is equally true, that when he throws off his garment of light and plucks off his mask, and shows himself without a blush, he is more daringly impious. To "declare our sin as Sodom," to have "a whore's forehead that cannot blush," and say without fear, I will not receive Christ, may now be made almost meritorious, merely because it is not hypocritical; but it will, in the day of repentance or of judgment, fill us with astonishment, that we durst say to him that could instantly stop our breath, "I will not do as thou hast commanded."

2. Behold the surprising triumph of grace over insolent profaneness.

I call it a victory of grace; because, though it is mentioned as a story of ordinary life, in which we should speak of a person's changing his mind by force of reflection; yet we are taught in Scripture that repentance is the gift of Christ, "who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." How great is the grace displayed when these daring rebels are not struck dead, but have space given them for repentance! How many provoking replies God receives from the lips of creatures, who breathe only by his permission, and whose mouth he might have stopped by the hand of death, the moment their refusal

escaped from their lips. Every one that has hitherto refused to serve God, should reflect how many years God has borne that answer, "I will not." When we first ventured to say this, he might have taken us at our word, and said, "Then you shall not;" as he struck the barren fig-tree, and said, "No fruit grow on thee for ever." He might have "sworn in his wrath, that we shall never enter his rest." But ah! if he had always taken us at our word, who then could have been saved? For, unhappily, we have all said in our hearts, "I will not," except there should be any here who have been sanctified from the womb. But how few are those who yield themselves to God's service, as soon as reason hears the voice, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." The great mass of God's servants were once rebels, and if they now serve him, it is because they have repented of saying, "I will not." But he who might have left us to the hardness of our hearts, delights to melt them and "make them willing in the day of his power." When he says, "A new heart will I give you;" what is 'it, but promising that he who said, "I will not," shall "repent and do works meet for repentance?" What is this, when stripped of its bold Eastern imagery, but saying, Though they spurned my orders with contemp-tuous indifference and rebellion, I will give them a heart to regret this, and to meet my commands with loving, willing, obedient minds. Strangely as some pervert all right reason, by making a kind of merit of not professing to obey God, if ever grace gives them a new heart, they will bitterly repent of this as a cool, determined insult to the eternal majesty of God. The true penitent loaths and abhors himself, for every moment spent without fearing God and doing his will. Hear him: "Ah, how often I said, 'I will not!" God, forgive me that I made my will superior to thine; though the slightest word from thy lips should have swayed every faculty of my soul, every member of my body, and every moment of my time." O, it is instructive, impressive, affecting, melting, transporting, to see the once stout-hearted sinner, crushed with the weight of divine authority, laid prostrate in the dust of humiliation, confounded at his own

former impiety, viewing his rebellion in its true light, calling his sins by their proper names, and most bitterly regretting that he ever durst say to God, "I will not."

But the true proof of this son's repentance, is, that he afterwards went to work in the vineyard. For as long as he did not, who would give him credit for repentance? The eternal God might justly disdain to employ us, when we repent, and would fain go; yet he deals not with us according to our sins, but admits us into his service, as soon as he gives us hearts to repent of our former rebellion. For repentance towards God is accompanied with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and this, again, with the justification of our persons; and this, also, with the acceptance of our services. Thus, "by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and God testified, by the acceptance of his gifts, that he was righteous."

Even the robber, converted at the last extremity, on the cross, was admitted to do service for God, by bearing witness to the innocence of Christ, and reproving his fellow-criminal. This renders the practical part of religion so important: it is at once the test of the reality of what is called the experimental part, and a proof of the enjoyment of the privileges of the pardoned, who are admitted to serve and glorify God. How can we pretend to repent of not doing God's will, if we still do it not? To be employed to do God's will, to offer to him acceptable service, is, to a true penitent, such an honour, such a favour, such a proof of God's forgiveness and of entire reconciliation, that no one who has not known it by experience, can conceive the exultation and delight he feels in God's service.

Some would argue, from this parable, that religion is a system of works; because it is said, "Go work to-day." But we might as well contend that religion lies in pruning vines and keeping vineyards. If, however, we confess (for we must) that this is figure and imagery, and that the imagery of a parable should be wisely expounded, we turn to consider the truth intended to be conveyed. We find, then, that when some said to Christ, "What shall we do that we may work

the works of God?" he answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he has sent." This is God's great command, under the dispensation of the Gospel, that we receive, with the obedience of faith, the testimony of Christ, and bring forth fruits of holiness, so as to "show our faith by our works." This was the very thing for which Christ uttered the parable, as we see in ver. 32. Works are of no value, but as fruits of faith in Christ; for no productions of the fallen children of men are acceptable to God, but those that are borne by branches of Christ, the living vine. When we are grafted into him, he says, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." While we believe not in Christ for salvation, whatever we do, it is not in his vineyard that we work.

II. A picture of fair profession followed by obstinate disobedience; v. 30.

From those who at first sinned by making no profession at all, or rather by professing impenitence, our Lord leads us to the consideration of a far different class of persons, such as, unhappily, we too often see—those who are prompt and forward to promise every thing, but do nothing. Having been agreeably surprised by those who turned out better than they promised, we are to suffer a bitter disappointment in such as promised all that we could have wished, but proved to be all that we could not have wished.

1. See how mere profession is spurned, both by God and conscience.

The second son is represented as saying, without any difficulty, or any apparent reluctance, "I go, sir." Many are so ready and forward to make a religious profession, that they are affronted when a Christian church is slow to accept their profession. But what is more easy than to say, as Israel did, at the foot of Sinai, "all that the Lord commandeth us will we do?" Words are cheap, and those who would never go any farther, would not hesitate to say, "I go, sir," if this would procure them a reputation among the pious. There is, to many minds, something so awful in not even pretending to fear God, but openly proclaiming to the world, "I will not

do what God commands," that they are eager to declare their good resolutions, and never think their own voice sounds so sweetly, as when it says, "I go, sir." But as the Saviour does not mean to exhibit a man's words merely, but the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees, he designed this as a reproof to their false profession of religion. Some feel flattered by being taken into a Christian society, considered as one of their members, so as to have a name and a place in the house of God. Many are naturally forward and conceited, so that they really think well of themselves; and some, whether they have a good opinion of their religion or not, having no great horror of insincerity, and wishing to be thought well of by others, push themselves forward and determine, at any rate, to have "a name to live." They will consent to every thing we say; and the words are scarcely out of our lips, but we are met with the reply, "O yes, certainly." These are some of the most difficult persons to deal with. Say what we will, they catch at our words with compliance, so prompt, that we know not what to do. Often we wish they would but contradict us.

There are multitudes, also, who are very ready to receive any profession that others are willing to make. They think that something is gained, both to the professor himself, and to the cause of religion, by receiving all that come. But so thought not our Lord. So thought not his Apostles. Many of our Redeemer's parables and sermons were designed to prevent and to detect false profession; and when mere pretenders entered the primitive church, at Jerusalem, a miracle was wrought to punish the hypocrites. From that time "fear came upon all that heard, and of the rest durst no man join himself to them." There is, indeed, something so horrible in intentional hypocrisy, it does so much mischief to the hypocrite himself, and is such a challenge to God's omniscience, that we would hope that not many intentional hypocrites are to be found. Men frequently make a false profession, because they have not much strength or decision of character, and have but little self-inspection, and therefore scarcely any self-knowledge. Their religious profession is the offspring

of levity and inconsideration. Some think that profession is, itself, a good work, independently of its sincerity; and that it merits some favour at the hands of God. They seem to think that merely to say, "I go, sir," is to do some great thing. Our Lord uttered the parable, to disabuse the nation of false professors, putting it to their own consciences, which of these did the will of the Father? For as God regards no man's profession any further than it is sincere, so the very consciences of the men, will testify, when their own sin is put in the form of another man's, that what is insincere is worthless. For what is a profession, but an open acknowledgment of the inward homage of the heart? What, then, is it worth, if it do not really speak the language of the heart? The dial plate and index of the watch are of no use, but to indicate the movement of the interior machinery, in accordance with the march of time. Who sets any value on the figured plate, merely as a picture; or on the hands, though made of gold? These, unless the time be indicated by them, are but a painted, or a golden lie. A religious profession is indeed valuable, when it is what it ought to be, an expression of the state of the heart. In this judgment both God and man agree.

But see

2. How the neglect of practice is regarded both in heaven and earth. This second son, though he had said "I go," went not.

The fair profession of many is never sustained by correspondent actions, but they go away and think no more of it. They who profess "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory," say they believe in him who searches the heart; and yet many of them do not "believe with the heart unto righteousness:" for how manifest is this by their ignorance, their self-righteousness, their love of the world, their dread of death, and all those sins of unbelief which we find in those who have made no profession! Our Saviour complains that the Scribes and Pharisees "repented not that they might believe" in his name. It is the will of God that all those who openly profess obedience with their lips, should

enter into the secret closet, and by deep personal devotion honour our Father in secret; but many who call themselves religious, live in the neglect of this prime duty, and have no other religion than that which can be seen of men. Even that public profession of Christ's name, which is his grand command, and is accompanied with sacrifices for his sake, is neglected by some, who yet speak fair, and would fain be understood to say, "I go, sir." They shrink back from all honest avowal, like those Scribes and Pharisees who secretly were convinced that Christ was Messiah, but "did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

In their moral conduct, also, many who call themselves Christians do not obey the will of God, any further than suits their own convenience or interest (which is, indeed, no obedience to God at all); but wherever they have other tastes and inclinations, or suppose they have other interests, they scruple not to violate the commandment of God. There is one thing yet to be considered, in which these forward, hollow professors do not the will of the Father, and which was especially intended to be exposed by the parable. Christ exhibits the sons as sent to spend the day in cultivating their father's vineyard. This was to teach us that human life is to be employed in serving God. He who does not regard himself as created for God's service, and redeemed for this very purpose, whatever he may do, obeys not the will of God. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God;" and thus render the common business of life a religious sacrifice, by devoting all to God. But many who promise fairly are far from spending life in this spirit; they may say "I go, sir," but they go not.

Of such a profession, our Lord showed, by the question,

Of such a profession, our Lord showed, by the question, what he thought. The very enemies, too, by their answer expressed what they really thought of it; and, indeed, common sense compels men to join with Nazianzen in saying, "better is a dumb work than a mighty speech." False religion treats God as a courtier serves men; bowing politely, and appearing to consent to all petitioners, while all are dis-

appointed of what they fancied he promised. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." We cannot sow thorns and reap wheat. They who attempt to put a cheat upon God, arm his omnipotence to avenge his insulted omniscience! He may justly say, "If you honour me in public by fair speeches, and neglect my commandments in secret, because it is only God that knows the sin, your hypocrisy shall be unmasked, and men shall see your shame." What crimes have not false professors committed? Who was it sold Jesus Christ? the man who cried "Hail, master! and kissed him;" and who can tell how such inconsistency as saying "I go, sir," and never taking an obedient step, hardens the heart? Our divine Teacher here exhibits those who at first openly despised religion, as afterwards repenting and entering into the king-dom of God; while the Scribes and Pharisees saw the publicans and harlots enter in, and did not learn from them to repent and believe the Gospel. We may so persist in a false profession as almost to believe our own lie at last, and fancy our profession true. "For this cause shall God send them strong delusion to believe a lie." How few who have ever made a false profession have afterwards been converted while members of a Christian church!

Nor is this all. The habit of professing piety and living in the secret neglect of holy practice, is fraught with mischief to others. We not only bind ourselves over to perdition, but we drag down other souls with us. The sins of false professors load the name of religion with infamy in the estimation of the men of the world, by which they "stumble and fall, and are broken, and snared, and taken." "Woe to the world, because of offences; it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." Were you to see a man conducting another to the edge of a lofty cliff overhanging the sea, and to observe that, on arriving there, the leader fastened a millstone to the other and threw him over the precipice, would you not be filled with horror at the sight? But Christ says it were better for you to be thus treated, than to shock the faintest believer in Jesus by your false professions.

What a stumbling-block to young Christians is he who says one thing and does another! This subject demands that we close with what may, to some, appear a strange application—I demand hope with regard to the most alarming characters, and fear for the most specious.

The most alarming cases of human guilt seem to be those who, with daring impiety, tell their Maker they will not do what he commands; who, like publicans and harlots, give no signs of fearing or loving God, of dreading his vengeance, or courting his favour. We are here taught, however, that desperate as their case may appear, we must not despair of them. Hardened as they now are, they may repent. This has, indeed, been seen in the woman in the city, who was a sinner; in the robber converted on the cross; in the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who had shed the blood of Christ; in the Apostle Paul, who had been a persecutor and blasphemer; in the Corinthians, to whom the apostle says, "know ye not that neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom; and such were some of you, but ye are washed." We should not despair of the worst of men; but, indeed, who knows who are the worst of men? We may easily say, "those who commit certain sins, which are more gross, and, simply in themselves considered, more guilty, than the crimes of some other men;" yet these persons may be less guilty in the sight of God than some who make a fair profession of piety. Who does not now think of Judas? While looked upon as a holy Apostle, he was more guilty than the publicans and harlots. Who that had known his real character would not have cherished more hope of them than of him? Let us not, then, be provoked by the open iniquities of men to bitter hatred of them, or to hard speeches, much less to anothemas or execrations, as if there were no hope of their salvation. They may be less guilty than some specious professor. They may yet, in spite of all appearances, repent, find mercy, and be accepted of God and beloved of his church. It is far more conducive to piety and philanthropy to cherish hope of the most impious, to bear with them patiently, if peradventure God will give

them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, than to indulge our pride and bitterness by giving them up for lost.

Yet, let not the openly irreligious deceive themselves. Recollect that all our hopes centre in this, that they may cease to be what they now are; that they may repent of ever having been open impious rejectors of the word of God; in fine, that they may "hear his voice and not harden their hearts."

With regard to the most specious characters, we should still cherish fear.

Let us not glory over others, nor in ourselves, saying, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men are." For those over whom we triumph may cross us on the road, and the first be last, and the last first. Was it not so with Judas and the converted robber? A few days before, you might have seen an Apostle going forth with a fair and a high profession of a holy calling, preaching Christ's kingdom, working miracles, and casting out devils, so that some would have exclaimed, "Ah, that holy, happy man! He is sure of heaven! Oh, that my soul were in his soul's place!" But the robber you might have seen on the highway, plundering and, perhaps, murdering, in order to secure the prey, or escape the threatened punishment. "Guilty wretch," some would exclaim, "who can hope for his conversion, or forgiveness?" But now see them pass each other; the one going backward, the other forward; the man that seemed in the sure road to heaven plunging into that which leads to hell; the one who seemed on the borders of hell, rising and taking heaven. Judas, by transgression, fell, that he might go to his own place; and the robber is assured by Christ, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The Apostle sinks from the gates of heaven to the depths of hell; and the robber passes him, from the borders of the pit to the heights of bliss.

Oh, tremble, false professors, at the sound of your own voice; your own words condemn you; since, in saying, "I go," you own that you ought to go. Why, then, do you not? What can you do better? Is there any service sweeter than

that of your Lord, the Creator of your powers, the Father of your spirits? Let this be the last triumph of religion—a false professor converted and saved.

But our divine Teacher reminded his hearers, that "John Baptist came to you in the way of righteousness," or, as Luther renders it, "taught you the right way, and you believed not." This was the sign of an evil state of heart, that when the teacher was manifestly upright, you gave him no credence. Yet how was even this aggravated, when you saw the most abandoned of mankind melted and converted by his ministry, and this never led you to change your minds and believe on him whom you at first rejected! The sight of conversion, especially that of notorious sinners, should pierce others to the heart. Those who are conscious they have merely said, "I go, sir," should look at the marks of deep sincerity which a penitent profligate has often displayed, and go and repent of their insincere pretence.

What discoveries, then, will the day of revelation make! How justly did one say, "I shall then wonder at three things; to see some in heaven whom I did not expect to find there; not to see some whom I did expect; but, most of all, I shall wonder to find myself there." For how many of us may say, "It was once most improbable that I should ever 'repent and do works meet for repentance,' since I know how positively I said in my heart, if not with my voice, 'I will not.' And now, how often I fear lest, while I say, 'I go, sir,' I should not be found faithfully 'doing the will of my Father who is in heaven.'" Yet this very fear manifests a sincere solicitude to do the will of God from the heart; and "the Lord will fulfil the desire of them that fear

him; he will hear their cry and save them."

LECTURE XXXIV.

THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN.

MATT. XXI. 33-46. MARK XII. 1-12. LUKE XX. 9-19.

"Now will I sing to my well beloved a song touching his vineyard," said Isaiah. But how plaintive is that song! What a melancholy reverse, what a cruel disappointment that beautiful inspired ode exhibits! A scene which opens like a morning of Paradise, with all that is fair, holy, blissful, and hopeful, terminates in a Paradise lost, or exchanged for the lake of Sodom. This day "the Lord God of the holy prophets" takes the harp into his own hands, and a second time fetches from it melancholy notes, that proclaim Jerusalem's sin, and foretell her approaching doom. To prove the former,

I. The distinguished privileges of the Jewish church are displayed.

The manner in which this passage is introduced by the Evangelist Matthew shows the order in which it stands, as a sequel to the parable which we last considered. This, though considerably longer than that, has much of its beautiful simplicity, its striking energy, and touching grace. The Most High is represented as a man at the head of an establishment, who, to employ his capital in the way most conducive to his interests, planted a vineyard. Judea, though mountainous and rocky, was peculiarly suited to the growth of the vine, and Cato has observed, that "no property was more precious than a vineyard, but none demanded more labour." This householder is said to have planted a vine-

yard, which intimates that there had previously been none in that spot. It is not nature, but labour and skill, or capital, that furnishes this luxury: the Jewish nation was taken from a state of nature, from the rest of mankind, by a special providence, and settled in Canaan, as the church of the living God, with a strong hand and stretched out arm. The hedge which was placed around the vineyard, to separate and defend it, is, by the Jews, interpreted to mean their law, or covenant of peculiarity, by which they were distinguished from the rest of mankind. There can, indeed, be no doubt that this was one of the great designs of the peculiar rites and ceremonies of the Levitical dispensation, to operate as a middle wall of partition, that the seed of Abraham might not be mingled with the rest of the nations, till Messiah should come. But a special Providence, too, watched over that nation, and was a hedge about it; for "the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, according to the number of the tribes of Israel." The territory and history of every other state were regulated in subserviency to this one chosen people.

If we must suppose that the "wine press" was designed, not merely to adorn the parable, and to give it a proper resemblance to fact, but that something peculiar among the Jews corresponded to the press, we must look to their seat of worship, first in the tabernacle and afterwards in the temple, where the fruits of the vineyard were to be presented to its lord, and the juices of the vine were poured forth, a grateful libation, so that wine is said to cheer the heart of God, as well as man. The "tower" may refer, not merely to the defence which God afforded to his people, but to that strong place which formed their capitol, in the midst of which the temple was erected. Vineyards, in Judea, were furnished with such towers, to defend them from the beasts of the field, or the incursions of thieves, who would lay waste the vines; and so the church of God, in the promised land, was defended by the city of David, the hero-king, who not only exalted Israel by the battles and victories of his own days, but pro-

vided for their future security, by the fortifications of the strong-hold of Zion.

After such provision for its abundance and its safety, the vineyard was let out to cultivators, as our farms are, by those who, among us, employ their capital in land. The close of this parable being directed against the leaders of the Jewish church, the builders who rejected the chief corner-stone, shows that the priests and magistrates are intended by what we call husbandmen, whose conduct is here branded with deserved infamy. In the parable, the owner is said to remove to a distance, for a considerable time. God, indeed, is always present through the whole universe, and in an especial manner with his own church and people; but after having settled the Jews in Canaan, he did not interpose again, as at first, but left them as if he had withdrawn to a distance; and now, for a long time, he had exhibited no very marked interference in their affairs.

Numerous and valuable were the privileges which heaven bestowed on the Jewish people, in thus treating it as a vineyard, planted by his own hand, for his own honour and use; "for he has not dealt so with any nation." A horrid desert, beset with thorns and thistles, and abounding in noxious weeds, could not present such a contrast to a vineyard, planted with the choicest vines, and defended with jealous care, as the heathen world, mad upon its idols, and abandoned to its own ways, formed to the Jewish commonwealth, blessed with the true idea of God, and furnished with the means of worshipping him acceptably, for the enjoyment of the chief good, the favour and love of God. The heathens, ignorant of the origin and fall of man, and having no hope of a deliverer, were in Egyptian darkness, compared with that people, who "had light in all their dwellings," and were looking out for him who is the hope and consolation of Israel. While the temple of the Jews was the abode of wisdom, with its attendant virtue, and while their altar burned with the fire of true devotion, the heathens were made wicked by their very religion; their temples were the stews of prostitution, the taverns of drunkenness, and the slaughter-houses of cruelty.

If you ask, "What advantage had the Jew, and what profit is there of circumcision?" we answer, with the Apostle, "Much every way, but chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God." By their sacred books, the favoured nation were brought into contact with one who contains an infinity of being, of excellence, of virtue, and of bliss; and they were made to feel that God was over all, and in them all. How far below the oracles of God was the literature of Greece and Rome! Infinitely beneath Israel's Jehovah, was Homer's Jove, whom the mythologic poet exhibits as continually quaffing wine, contriving amours, or quarrelling with the other gods. But no people can be separated to the honour and distinctions of the church of God, without enjoying, in some degree, the advantages of holy society, the first privilege of mankind, till we join the spirits of the just made perfect. In the worst time of Israel's history, God "reserved to himself seven thousand among them who had not bowed the knee to Baal;" and sometimes he sent-them prophets, such as angels loved to come down and talk with, and with whom the high and lofty One deigned to hold familiar converse. But the heathen were left to perpetual intercourse with the wicked and the foolish; for even their philosophers deserved no better title, as far as religion and eternity are concerned. If, from this sweeping censure, we except Socrates; that singular man was so superior to his compatriots, as to have excited their envy, which condemned him to die by poison. Let us not turn from this contrast of the privileges of the Jews, with the disadvantages of all other nations, without reflecting that to this high distinction, enjoyed by the church of God, we have now succeeded, with all the addition of bliss introduced by the coming of the Son of God. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

II. The abuse of privilege, with which the Jewish nation is charged.

The parable represents the owner as letting out the vineyard, not for a money rent, but for a certain proportion of the produce, that the landlord's table should be furnished with wine and fruit, in return for the use of his land. This is not common among us, though we sometimes speak of a corn rent; but in the East it was usual for the tables of the great to be supplied with different articles of necessity, or luxury, from their estates in various parts of the country. "At the season," therefore, as the two latter evangelists say, or "When the time of the fruits drew near," as Matthew expresses it, the lord of the vineyard sent his servants to receive these fruits of his property. God does nothing out of season, and when he demands returns, we may be sure it is time. Let us, then, beware, lest we imitate the Jews in that which Christ here exposes.

The treatment given to the servants of God, who, in his name, demand the returns which are his due.

I will not detain you with criticisms on the variation in the statement of the Evangelists, which are not of sufficient importance to call off our attention from the practical lessons here pressed on the conscience. One servant after another was sent; for though the first was ill treated, the patience of God commissioned a second; nor did the abuse given to him, prevent the mission of a third. By common consent, this is applied to the conduct of the Jews towards the prophets of God. Michaiah was "put in prison, and fed with bread of affliction, and water of affliction." Jeremiah was thrown into a dungeon, where he was in danger of perishing. Elijah's life was so threatened, that he was compelled to flee, and induced, from distress of mind, to ask God's leave to die: he was saved from a troop of soldiers, only by the fire that came down from heaven to destroy them. Zechariah was slain between the porch and the altar. Isaiah was, according to the tradition of the Jews themselves, sawn asunder; and it has been thought that the extreme sufferings mentioned in the epistle to the Hebrews, were inflicted by the Jews on their own prophets; so that the Apostle sums up their conduct thus; "They both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets." But as the husbandman is said to have sent, when his former servants had been thus abused, some more honourable than they, we are reminded of John the Baptist. But him they delivered up to Herod, as a punishment for the testimony of the forerunner to Christ the Saviour. The only reward given to this first of prophets was a prison and a grave, and the Jews are charged with his blood. Such were the returns rendered to God by the rulers of his own nation, the priests of the only true church, who, instead of rendering the fruits of humble and devout submission to the message conveyed by the prophets, persecuted them, stoning some, and killing some. The wine press, that should have overflowed with the blood of the grape, for the use of its rightful lord, poured forth the blood of his servants, saints, and prophets, who were martyred for maintaining the

rights of God.

Last of all, we have to consider the treatment of the Son of God. If Jesus Christ were a mere creature, he was nothing but a servant; for it is utterly impossible that a creature should cease to be a servant to the Creator. But Paul expressly distinguishes between Moses, the first of the servants whom God has placed in his house, and Christ, who "is a son over his own house." Our Lord here says, that, after sending servants, the master of the vineyard sent his own son. He had but this one; for, according to right views of Christ, he is the only-begotten Son of God; though, according to some, there may be many such sons. The sending of the Son of God is always represented as the grandest display of divine benevolence. This ought to have affected, and awed, and shamed men into obedience; as our Saviour shows, when he represents the lord of the vineyard saying, "they will reverence my son."

Instead of this, they exclaimed, "It is the heir: come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Does Christ hint that the leaders of the Jews knew who he was? I fear he does; and that they are here charged with the sin against the Holy Ghost, "that can never be forgiven." John Baptist bore so distinct and decisive testimony to Jesus, and the Jews were so convinced that John was a prophet, that we see not how they could have escaped conviction. Times and events so concurred to prove that

this must be the promised Messiah, that they, by the lips of Nicodemus, acknowledged Jesus "as a teacher come from God." His miracles were so numerous, so grand, so convincing, that the leaders of the people must have sinned against their own light and conscience in rejecting Christ. The Saviour, therefore, often seems to charge them with knowing it, and with that degree of light which aggravated their sin, and bound it on their souls. If, in other places, it is said they were blind and ignorant, and knew not the Lord of glory, and if Peter seems to plead this as their apology, "I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers;" I conceive this proves no more than the partial innocence of some, and the blindness of all to the *true* glory of Christ, and the spiritual nature of his reign.

But, as Caiaphas told them, "they knew nothing at all, if they did not see, that one man, however innocent, must be sacrificed to the people; and that, to save their place and nation, they must take Christ out of the way;" they are here represented as aiming to secure the vineyard as their own, by killing the heir. Christ interfered with their false doctrine, their avarice, and their domination, by demanding the tribute due to God's authority and holiness. They hoped, if they could take him out of the way, that they might do as they pleased in the church, and turn religion into a trade for their own gain. So they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, crucifying the Prince of life; and, instead of the fruits of righteousness for which God had sent, they returned to him the commission of the foulest crime. Having shed this, the best blood that ever flowed in human veins, they thirsted for more; and nothing but the blood of saints and apostles could satiate their malice.

III. The punishment denounced is just what might be expected.

If, where God has given much, he will require the more; who can calculate the sum of misery to which they must be doomed, who, having received such advantages as were afforded by the visits of inspired prophets, and of the Son of God, requited them by "doing despite to the Spirit of grace,"

laying violent hands on heaven's messengers, and, at last, shedding the blood of the Son of God himself?

Christ drew forth their sentence from their own mouths, when he said, "What, therefore, shall the lord of the vineyard do?" They replied, "He will miserably destroy these wicked men;" or, as Campbell happily renders the original, "he will put those wretches to a wretched death; and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall render him their fruits in their seasons." The parable was so naturally constructed, and was told in a manner so interesting and energetic, that the hearers were entranced; and when Christ put the question, they replied, as it were involuntarily, without reflecting that their just sentence fell upon themselves. Yet when they recovered their recollection, and saw that they had spoken what was for them too true, they exclaimed, "God forbid!" As Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man," Christ might have replied to them, "Out of your own mouth are ye judged;" for this will form the sting of future punishment, that our own conscience will echo to the sentence of the judge. They recalled their own decision; but Christ, looking earnestly at them, appealed to their own Scriptures, "What is this, then, that is written? The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." The rulers of the Jews were well enough read in the Scriptures to be aware that these words were taken from the 118th Psalm. The rabbinical school has a fable concerning this text, that when the temple was being built, there was a stone which was thrown aside, as unfit to be used; but, before the erection was finished, was found to be exactly suited to be the head or top stone. This legend, as it is without authority, is devoid of sense; for who can suppose that the Spirit of inspiration would have represented it as a marvellous affair, and a divine work, to fit a particular stone for a certain part of a building? The legend is also contrary to the figure employed, which alludes to a foundation-stone placed at the corner where two walls meet, to unite the parts, as well as support the weight of the building. It is manifestly

the design of the Psalmist, to show that God would, in his inscrutable counsels, and omnipotent providence, confound the wicked, by making Christ to be the great foundation of our hopes, though rejected by those who set up for builders in the church.

Prophecy is best interpreted by the event. This sentence was brought home to the rulers of the Jews by their own deed; for they immediately conceived the design of seizing Christ, from which they were diverted, for the present, only by their fear of the people. Christ, therefore, presented to them a still more legitimate and awful ground for fearing the consequences that should follow from their own rejection. "He that falleth on this stone shall be broken." This figure supposes a foundation-stone placed at the corner of a building, and so large as to stand above ground, projecting beyond the other stones, so that a person walking carelessly by might stumble over it. But what would be the effect? Would the stone be injured? Would not the stumbler alone bear the consequences of his own carelessness and folly? And what is the result of sinners taking offence at Christ, treating him as a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence? Is he injured? Is he a loser, because we despise him? No; it is we that are hurt, as if our flesh were bruised, or our limbs broken, by stumbling over a stone. Our moral character is altered for the worse, our minds are blinded, our hearts hardened, our "consciences seared as with a hot iron," when Christ is to us "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence."

Even this, however, is not all. "On whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Here the imagery is changed; the vast mass of rock which is employed as the foundation-stone is supposed to be raised, as by machinery, in order to be dropped into its place; but it falls upon one of the builders, who has rashly put himself in the way. How dreadful would be its effect! For, if even stumbling at Christ does us immediate injury, what will be the ruin, should Christ requite the offence we took at him, by rejecting us, and falling with the whole weight of infinite justice upon the guilty soul? So just and mighty is this

foundation of the church, this rock of ages, on which Christians build, that his wrath must grind us to powder. It must, as the expression strictly signifies, "sift or scatter us to the winds." The prospect of this gave a tone of deep melancholy to the Apostle's language, when speaking of the Jews.

The execution of the sentence is thus described.

The king and lord of the vineyard "sent forth his armies, and miserably destroyed those wicked husbandmen." He is Lord of hosts; and while all the heavenly armies are at his command, legions of angels fly to do his will. The armies of the earth, too, are at his beck; and though their commanders may aim at nothing but the gratification of their ambition, by earthly conquest, they, by his secret and omnipotent control, execute his wrath upon his foes. To punish the rejection of Christ, God employed the Roman host. To describe the fall of Jerusalem, and the destruction brought upon the Jews, when upon them came the blood of all the righteous, and, what was more precious than all, the blood of the Son of God, would require a volume. That volume would show all the truth of these words, "he will miserably destroy those wicked husbandmen." Such miseries attended this judgment, that the heart of the fierce warrior himself, the commander of the Roman forces, was wrung with anguish at scenes which the sun never before saw.

Yet these were "but the beginning of sorrows," the smallest part of the judgment. The sting of their misery lay here; "the kingdom of God was taken from them." They were cast out from the honour which they had enjoyed, for more than two thousand years; and have ever since been "no people." Though they have remained separate from all others, prevented by an unparalleled providence from melting down into the common mass of mankind, this is not an honourable and enviable distinction, such as the church of God enjoys in being made "a peculiar people," a holy nation; but the present distinction of the Jews keeps them within a boundary, which, like the walls of hell, shuts out the good, and dooms them to the perpetual society of the unbelieving and the unclean. To be cast out of the kingdom of God, is

to be delivered over to Satan, who is god of this world, and to live, even while here, in a terrestrial hell.

By the same dreadful sentence of ejectment from the church, the Jews are deprived of what may most properly be called *the use* of the Scriptures. The last volume of divine revelation, the New Testament, which pours a flood of light upon the Old, they reject altogether; but even the former part, which we have received from them, they have virtually lost. The Jews can scarcely be said to read the Old Testament, and of the study of it they have no conception. They always talk of its meaning under the influence of rabbinical traditions of the most contemptible and bewildering kind. The Mishnah and Gemarah, forming together the Talmud, they call wine; but the inspired text, water. If "the Old Testament is read in their synagogues every Sabbath day," as the apostle observes, it was not without reason that he said, "The veil is upon their heart in the reading of the Old Testament." They employ a kind of sing-song chant, the most mischievous device that Satan ever introduced under the name of worship. While this mummery of worship is roing on a man who understands Hebrary well will listen in going on, a man who understands Hebrew well, will listen in vain for the sense of Moses in the law, and David in the Psalms. Thus the Jews are cast out from the grand advantage of the church of God and his genuine worship, with all its divine illumination of the mind, and all its holy influence on the heart.

But whither is the kingdom of God fled? Has he none upon earth? Is this world abandoned to the undivided reign of sin and wrath? No; he still has a kingdom among men. Where is it, then? The kingdom of God is among you, my Christian brethren. Here it is, if you "worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Here is the separation from the wicked which constituted the grand distinction of the Jews. To throw down the barrier, then, which separates the church from the world, to merge the distinction between Christians and others, by such conformity to the world that you can see no difference, is, as far as possible, to fling away our most valu-

able privilege, and our highest glory. To us, now, "are committed the oracles of God." By the addition of the New Testament, we are enabled to derive far higher advantages from the Old. Let us say with the Psalmist, "Thy words have I taken as my heritage; for they are the rejoicing of my heart!" If other nations glory over us, boasting of the rich productions of their climate and soil; if they show us gold and diamonds, asking, "What have you equal to this?" we show the Bible. If they display spices and perfumes, and ask, "What have you equal to this?" we reply again, "the Bible." If they point to magnificent buildings, the monuments of ancient skill and power, saying, "What have you equal to this?" again we say, "the Bible."

The genuine worship of the living God, inspired by his own Spirit, once the exclusive privilege of the Jews, now is ours. They used to point to the altar; but we point to the cross, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Instead of the unprofitable forms of the synagogue, we have the washing of regeneration, and the

The genuine worship of the living God, inspired by his own Spirit, once the exclusive privilege of the Jews, now is ours. They used to point to the altar; but we point to the cross, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Instead of the unprofitable forms of the synagogue, we have the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, set forth by the waters of baptism, and a memorial of the all-sufficient atonement in the supper of the Lord. We have the preaching of the Gospel, which God "ordained for salvation to them that believe." The opening of the book of divine revelation, the loosing of the seals, and the exposition of the Scriptures, the offering of the secret incense of prayer in the Mediator's name, and the singing of the song of the Lamb, all form the blessings of the heavenly kingdom.

But are we sure of its continuance? Must we enjoy it for ever? Ah! think of the terms: it is "given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." No longer than we can show these, are we secure of the continuance of our privileges. Go, ask, where are the seven churches of Asia? Where the churches of Christ in Judea? Where is the church of Rome? Did God say to her, "Take heed lest he spare not thee?" And does he not say to us, "Be not high-minded, but abound in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

How much of the agony of anxiety should be thrown into our inquiries concerning our own fruitfulness! Each one faithful to himself will exclaim, "Tell, oh tell me, what fruits I should bear?" I answer, then, the structure of this sermon of our Lord teaches us, that one of the first fruits is devoted and humble attention to his messengers. They who scorned and persecuted the servants whom the lord of the vineyard sent, gave the first signs of their own guilt, and their approaching doom. I own, indeed, that no inand their approaching doom. I own, indeed, that no inspired prophets come to us; and I would be the last to assume an importance that is not due to ministers. But I do say, that when we prove that we bring a message from God to you; if you are a people bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom, you will attend to our message, and esteem the messenger for his work's sake. But, above all, you will reverence God's Son. No language which we can employ can do justice to the claims he has upon your regard. If you bear the fruits of a people enjoying the kingdom of God, you will be filled with astonishment, and unutterable gratitude, that the Son of God should come on a message of mercy to you. You will view with horror the crime of men in killing him. The share we all have in it, by the sins that in killing him. The share we all have in it, by the sins that were laid upon him, and the irreverence you have once shown to him, will fill you with shame. You will bow before him with obedient attention, and when his word is addressed to you, say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." You will see his goings in the sanctuary, and open your hearts to the impressions produced by the revelation of himself. Once more, the fruit of the kingdom of God, is high preference of the divine glory to our own supposed interest. I say supposed; for God's glory and our own interest are never opposed. Well did Augustin say, "In seeking myself, instead of thee, O God, I lost both thee and myself: but in seeking thee, instead of myself, I gain both myself and thee." These husbandmen said, "Let us kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be ours; let us say, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and we possible from the many bloomed are all the content. and ye perish from the way: blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

LECTURE XXXV.

THE WEDDING ROBE.

Матт. xxii. 1—14.

THE union of dignity with condescension, which the Scriptures display, well accords with their claim to a divine origin. For if God make a revelation of himself to man, it must be marked by the grandeur of infinity bending to hold converse with worms. In the parables, especially, we behold the infinite mind stooping to instruct children by pictures; for even here he imparts truths so awfully grand that they need a veil, in order to spare our feeble sight. One of the most familiar, amiable, and attractive images that human life affords, a wedding, with its attendant festivities, is employed to exhibit to us truths of infinite grandeur; but the bright lights of the agreeable part of the scene are set off by dark shades, in the judgment executed upon those who despised the invitation, or gave it only a hypocritical reception. For this parable was designed as a warning to the priests and rulers of the Jewish nation, to whom it was delivered, as well as for encouragement to the Gentiles concerning whom it speaks.

I. The conduct of God towards great masses of mankind is here proposed to our consideration.

The imagery, which scarcely needs explanation, exhibits Christ as a king's son. The church was of old charged to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry." Nor is the idea of his marriage entirely novel. He is exhibited, in the forty-fifth psalm, as entering into the conjugal relation: "Hearken, O daughter," saith the Spirit, "and consider, and incline thine

ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." John the Baptist speaks thus of Christ, "He that has the bride is the bridegroom." In the Apocalyptic vision it is said, "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready." In this union all parties are supposed to rejoice; so that a public feast is made to express the general joy. God rejoices over his Son, and in the salvation of the church, by her union with him. Angels shout, "Behold, we bring you glad tidings." To invite guests to this feast, servants are sent forth. Their failure in one instance, and their success in another, exhibit,

1. The calling of the Jews, and their disobedience, with its consequences.

As it is common to invite friends, and even to say, some time before the event, "You shall be at my wedding," the persons first invited are said to have been previously bidden. We know that the Jews were early informed of the designs of God's mercy in Christ, and were invited to look for him that should come to bring salvation. Under this figure, they were assured that their "Maker should be their husband; for I will espouse thee to me with loving-kindness, saith Jehovah." The prophets who were sent, from time to time, to the Jews, painted the Saviour to the life; specified the time, the place, and the circumstances of his birth; and, while other nations were in profound ignorance of the great secret, God had revealed it to the seed of Abraham, his friend. And what were these prophecies, but so many invitations to the marriage feast?

When John the Baptist came, he said, that as the friend of the bridegroom, he "rejoiced greatly to hear the bridegroom's voice." But, ah! he said too, that "no man receiveth his testimony." The prophet had, indeed, already in Christ's name uttered this complaint, "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? He is despised and rejected of men." But, as the invitation of a king is a command, this refusal was an insult. It was, alas, most rude, unaccompanied with any apology, or any reason. All

that is said is, that "they would not come." To the same persons Christ said, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." "Though he had done so many miracles among them, yet they believed not on him."

Again, "the king sent forth other servants." Who were they? I conceive, that this part of the parable points out the ministry of the Apostles, after Christ's resurrection; because they were enabled to press upon those that were bidden, that "all things were now ready; that the oxen and the fatlings were killed." Until Christ had actually died, and said, "It is finished," it was not possible to tell such tidings as the Apostles were enabled to proclaim. This was a consideration that ought to have affected their hearers, especially among the Jews. What the ancient patriarchs looked forward to with hope, was now published as actually accomplished; that the Saviour is come, and has died, and has risen again, and is gone into heaven "to make intercession for us." I am the more inclined to think that the ministry of the Apostles was represented by this part of the parable, because the rejection of their embassy was immediately followed by the vengeance here recorded.

For "they made light of it;" or, as the Greek is, "neglected it." Why? They were otherwise engaged, and, as they seemed to think, better engaged. One went to his farm, and another to his merchandise, saying, within themselves, that they were too busy to spend their time at a wedding. This is the very spirit of the men of the world, who often seriously declare, that they really have no time to attend to religion; an excuse the more formidable, because it seems to them so natural, so lawful, so innocent, so prudent. "The God of this world blinds the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." The absolute necessity of attending to business is set up in opposition to the call of the Gospel; one imperative duty is exhibited after another; and as this is a chain made up of an infinite number of links, there is no end to the hindrances to religion. Thus, men are drawn away to death. What does

it avail to tell them of the love of God in giving his Son, while their whole souls are filled with the thoughts of business? Of what use is it to expose the danger of refusing the invitation of the Gospel, while men are absorbed with the danger to which their ships and their merchandise are exposed? What did it signify, that Jesus proved himself innocent, or even the true Messiah, when the high priest said, "if we let him alone, the Romans will come and take away our place and nation?" Thus lightly they rejected Israel's hope, and coolly said, "Why talk about his character, or his claims, when the very existence of our nation is at stake?"

This, however, was not the worst; for the love of the world is enmity with God: and "the remnant took the servants and treated them spitefully, and slew them." Such was the reward given for the high privileges bestowed on the Jewish nation. The messengers sent to invite them to the feast of mercy, they mocked and reviled, and, at last, slew; so that Jesus said, "Jerusalem, thou art she who killest the prophets!" "God gave them prophets and wise men;" but their capital was called the prophet-slaver. At last he sent them his Son, and him they slew. After this, he sends them his Apostles, saying, "preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." From his throne he sends them an invitation to the feast of mercy; but they imprison and slay the Apostles. For what? For saying to them, "all things are ready, come to the marriage." Unaccountable infatuation! To be angry with those that seek to do us a kindness! To be affronted with the messenger for pressing a kind invitation! yet who can deny the fact? No enmity has been so bitter, no persecution so cruel, as that which the world has shown towards those who sought most sincerely its salvation. For no other crime was Stephen, the first martyr, killed.

Could this be otherwise than provoking to the king? Who can be indifferent to the rejection of his love? Who see his most gratuitous kindness ungratefully spurned, and his goodness requited with unreasonable spite and deadly cruelty, without feeling himself called to express his resent-

ment of such conduct? God has assured us that he is angry with those who reject the invitation of his word. Whoever imagines that the opportunities of hearing the Gospel, and being invited to come to Christ, are simple privileges, of which we may avail ourselves if we please, but which we may reject without peril, is greatly mistaken. Nothing exposes us more to the divine displeasure, than the rejection of that message of mercy which God sends to us in his word. Have you not observed, how "the year of redemption" and "the day of vengeance" are associated in Scripture? Isa. lxi. When slighted kindness turns to vengeance, when abused love kindles wrath, what fire burns so fiercely?

See this alarming truth exemplified in the conduct of God towards the Jews. The king sent forth his armies. Mark, not his servants who brought the invitation to the marriage. We have already observed that God is too kind to us to employ us as ministers of vengeance. Apostles, and pastors, and martyrs, whatever they suffered, were spared these severest pangs. Like their Lord, they shed no blood, but their own; and inflict no wounds, but on the conscience. We may warn you of "the wrath to come," but we are not appointed to execute that wrath. The civil magistrate, indeed, bears not the sword in vain, for he is a minister of vengeance. In this case, God employed the Romans. It was not Titus, or Vespasian, but the Lord of hosts, the God of battles, that marshalled the army against Jerusalem; and the emperor of the world was a mere unconscious instrument of heaven's vengeance on a crime which the Romans knew nothing of, or, if they had known, would have thought scarcely any crime at all. See the Roman eagle, at heaven's beck, spread its wings and dart upon the carcase. Jerusalem is given for a prey. The walls of an impregnable city fall before the executioner of divine wrath, and "the people, laden with iniquity," seem eager to co-operate with their destroyers.-Seditions, revolt, war, famine, pestilence, infatuation, fire, and sword, all conspire to work their ruin. They insolently flung off the yoke of a mighty people that could crush them with a blow. Their own seditions and divisions cause their blood

to flow from every vein. Famine compels the mothers to eat their own children. A fury worse than madness makes them executioners of each other. The very sanctuary for which they pretended to fight, was made the scene of their foulest murders. Fire consumes their dwellings, and their far-famed temple; and when all hope of successful resistance was gone, they spurned a proposal of peace, which the conquerors made. The ploughshare was driven over the foundations of their city, which had, to the blood of prophets, added that of the Son of God. Not driven together into capitivity, as at Babylon, but scattered as a vessel dashed to atoms, ground to powder, and blown away by the winds, they have been, through seventeen centuries, the monuments of the wrath of God against the despisers of his Son. If, in their early privileges, and in the invitations given to them, you behold the goodness, in their last judgment you see the severity, of God. But when the Romans are called God's armies, though like Sennacherib, they thought not so; it is a remarkable display of Christ's omniscience. For why should they send forth their armies, when they were already in possession of the city, and no power on earth could take it from them? But, by a singular providence, Jerusalem seemed to slip out of the hands of the Romans, and became again the head-quarters of Jewish rule, or rather misrule, so that their former masters had to conquer it again.

But what was the mighty affair which so turned the scale against the invitations of the Gospel, as to induce men to make light of it? Their farms and their merchandise. Of this we have considered the pernicious influence in a former parable. But our message is treated so lightly on account of these earthly affairs, which ruin men by myriads, that our Lord wisely repeated the warning, and left us no choice but to follow his footsteps, whatever men may say of our

repetitions.

And can rational beings, for the sake of their farms, make light of their souls and their salvation? Yes; alas! they stamp their feet upon this ground, and say, "Here is terra firma, something substantial. This we are sure of, it will

yield us some resources, something that we must have, or die. As to this Gospel, it is a matter of opinion. Religion is a speculation; the future world is all ideal; we do not know what there may be beyond the grave." They grasp their merchandise, and hold it up in the face of heaven's messengers, and say, "Here is something tangible;" they put the money into the bag, and poise it, and exclaim, "How weighty! this will produce us substantial food; as to what vou say, it is all light as air." Unhappy men! substantial things, as you call them, are slipping from your grasp. There is little reality in them while you possess them, and you know perfectly well, that you will soon have no more of them than if they had never been yours. It is true, you can tread upon your farms, and handle your merchandise, and count your gold, and so can the man who claims none of them as his own. The ground is as firm under the feet of the rude hind that ploughs the farm, as under the step of the lord that owns the soil. You are sure it is your own! this depends upon writings, numerous and complicated, which you can scarcely say you have read, and when you have, you have not understood; far less can you be sure they are all good and legal. Many have thought them so, and then discovered a flaw that transferred the lordly dominion to another. So ideal is earthly property, so light and airy is that good which you call substantial, and for which you make light of Christ and eternity! And if your property is all solid, your farms and your merchandise are all secure, can you carry them with you? How sure may you be of leaving them! Then what will be found weighty, when you yourselves make light of your farms and your gold, as you inevitably will? Will not your soul, then, outweigh a world? Must not your sins prove "heavier than the sand of the sea," and the wrath of God press so heavily upon you, as to make all things else seem light?

2. The transference and acceptance of the Gospel among the Gentiles, is the theme of the following part of the parable.

Among the glories of God's government, this is most

remarkable, that he ever displays the two sides of his character. He could, when different orders of creatures sinned, have assigned them both to wrath, or shown mercy on both. But he has done neither; not taking hold of angels, but taking hold of the seed of Abraham. He designs to show the evil of sin, and the glory of justice; nor will he suffer the world to be without proofs of the riches and power of divine grace. When the Lord "sent forth his armies, to destroy the murderers" of his Son, he was not so absorbed in vengeance, but "in the midst of wrath he remembered mercy." He said, "the marriage feast was ready, but those who were bidden were not worthy." This seems to intimate that only the worthy shall receive the blessing; but where shall they be found? We are repeatedly and most solemnly assured, that "it is not of him that willeth;" that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." The expression does, indeed, intimate, that those who were first invited, were most unworthy; as the Apostle said, "Ye put it away from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, and lo! we turn to the Gentiles."

The king sending his servants to highways, signifies that the Gentiles, who were to be invited to Christ, were like what we should call vagabonds, persons without a house and without a home, without friends, without character-the refuse of mankind. An apostle addressing a church in one of the most refined cities of the heathen world, reminds them of their former character in the most humiliating terms. It would be difficult to give an adequate description of the abominations of the heathen world; and if we could, it would be unfit for the pulpit. The first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is found by all the missionaries to be a faithful picture. Yet the servants acted as they were bidden. Did you ever, my dear hearers, reflect on the prompt obedience which the Apostles displayed—on the heroism which they must have exercised — on the triumphs they achieved, at the first gathering of the nations to Christ? Though the conduct of the twelve seemed foolish, even to infatuation, they succeeded in attracting the Gentile world into the church; the

idols fell before them, and the heathen historians of the time, speak of an infinite multitude of people who had embraced the new superstition, as they called Christianity. But when young and old, rich and poor, male and female, masters and slaves, philosophers and the unlearned, had been brought into the profession of Christ's religion; then, it soon became manifest that good and bad had been gathered into the same house, the festive hall. Here is the most distinguishing part of the parable. Some were good men, like Cornelius, the first-fruits of the Gentiles, and some bad, like Simon Magus. Apostles did not usually act under the discernment of the spirits; but took men into the church as we do, on a credible profession. But, having noticed the dealings of God with large masses, we are now conducted to

II. The divine conduct towards individuals.

We are not to suppose that only one improper guest is found amidst a crowd; for, as in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, we learn nothing of the number or proportion of sincere and false professors, from its being said there were five wise and five foolish; so here, the whole design of the Redeemer was to exhibit an individual, as one taken out of a class, in order to lead each of us to say for ourselves, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

1. Behold the detection. "When the king came in to see

1. Behold the detection. "When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on the wedding garment."

It seems to be supposed, that the king did not sit at the feast with the guests; but while he maintained his state, sitting with the royal family in another apartment, he condescended to come in to look at those guests who were feasting in an outer hall, to see that they were well attended, and to receive their congratulations on the marriage of his son. Our Lord, who is now in the highest heavens, which must receive him till the time of the restitution of all things, deigns to look on those who are in these courts of his house, where his professed people celebrate his worship, and eat the

supper of redeeming love. As he said of old, he still says, "I will come down and see how things are among them." For though he knoweth all things, he speaks of a looking, and a visiting, that is designed to teach us, rather than himself. To see the guests he comes in various ways: What are these? When he gives a peculiar searching power to the word, so that "the thoughts of men's hearts are detected, and they feel that God is in the midst of us." When his providence is as "a fan in his hand, and he thoroughly purges his floor," as he did in the judgment that came upon the Jewish church; or, in our country, at the Reformation. When death comes and plucks off masks, and shows all things in their true colours; so that "the sinners in Zion are afraid, and fearfulness surprises the hypocrites." When, at last, the Lord comes in judgment, to "manifest the thoughts of the heart, and give to every one according to his work."

But when the Lord comes to inspect the guests, he sees a joyous company, with cheerful looks, and all arrayed in wedding robes, except one man. This alludes to manners very different from ours; for though we should think it strange to bring persons out of the streets to a royal feast, and then condemn them for not being properly dressed; in the East, where kings provided immense wardrobes, and furnished their guests with dresses suited to the occasion, it was natural to find fault with one who had not on such a garment. Oriental travellers speak of being called to a feast, and having robes put on them. But it is natural to ask, what this wedding garment means? Some have answered, faith. To me, it seems neither according to the usage of Scripture, nor the reason of the thing, to call faith, a robe. The righteousness of Christ, which is said to be "unto all and upon all them that believe," is the true wedding garment.

Of this, Paul says, "Oh to win Christ and to be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ!" This righteousness is provided in the Gospel, for all, who by faith, will put it on. It is "upon all that believe." It is the only robe in which we can appear at the table of the king, with

acceptance; for, without it, we are in a state of condemnation and wrath. All who profess to accept the invitation of the Gospel, and sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, are supposed to put on this garment. The King, however, whose eyes are as flames of fire, and who says, "All the churches shall know that I am he that searches the heart," sees some who have not on this garment. "They are not all Israel, who are of Israel; neither because they are of the seed of Abraham, are they all children." That not all who profess to be Christians, do put on the righteousness of Christ, by a living, justifying faith, we need not labour long to prove. Some who would be offended, if not called Christians, deny that there is any such robe which they can put on, as the righteousness of another, even Jesus Christ. Openly and avowedly they parade their own righteousness, as their wedding robe, though we know not where they find it. Some even make the very act of approaching the Lord's table, a righteousness; and some, though they accord in words with the doctrine of justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, do not really in heart, believe.

Our Saviour therefore exhibits,

2. The arraignment. "And he said to him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?"

This question, we have seen, may be put to the conscience by the searching force of the word, when it proves "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword;" or by the force of providences, that will separate the false from the real guest; or at the time of death, when we must appear as we really are at the bar of God. The King will then try us according to our professions; speak to us as those who came into the guest-chamber, and professed to be friends; so that he may say to us, as to this man, "Friend, how camest thou in here, not having the wedding garment?" His being there is set down for nothing, or treated rather as a crime than a merit. His partaking of the feast, which others openly refused, our Lord passed by. Why? Because he had not on the wedding robe. The Scriptures invariably declare, that, if a man have not believed in Christ, and have not on his

righteousness, it signifies not what else he may plead. God has no pleasure in unbelievers. Our own righteousness, of whatever material it may be composed, is as filthy rags; for neither we, nor any thing we do, can be acceptable to God, except when we are found in Christ. What are we without the wedding garment?

How darest thou, then, come in hither without it? says the king. It must be supposed to be provided and offered, and when others put it on, this man might have done so too; but that either his carelessness said, "I am dressed sufficiently, I shall do very well without that robe;" or his pride refused to wear the robe of charity for which he must be indebted to the royal bounty. But our Redeemer informs us, that God will speak in the style of one that determines to maintain the honour of his throne. He seems to say, " Is this my house, or yours? Is heaven mine to confer, or yours to command?" If this question admits of but one reply, and that one is, that all is God's, to do with as he pleases; then does it not become him to prescribe the terms of life? Why will any one dare to appear before God in other attire than that which he has prescribed, and provided for all that will accept it? Such, at least, is the idea that is intended to be conveyed to us concerning our own appearance before God. For the Lord Jesus has "brought in everlasting righteousn'ess; by his one obedience many may be made righteous." We are invited to believe on him, "that righteousness may be imputed to us;" and we are warned, that in this only we can stand before God with acceptance. How can we venture, then, to come before the King in any other way? Why do we brave his omniscient eye, as if he could not detect our unbelief? Why defy his almighty arm, as if he durst not revenge the insult we put on his own dear Son?

But, on being questioned, the man was speechless. When he judged and tried himself, he justified himself, and concluded that his own righteousness was better than that of another; and when his neighbours questioned him, he put them to silence; but when God entered into judgment with him, and questioned his conscience, he was struck dumb.

Job defended himself too eagerly against the charge of his friends; and because their accusation of hypocrisy was false, he came too near the conclusion, that his righteousness could justify him, before God, as well as before men. But he said, when God arose, "I will put my hand on my mouth." "Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." "Every mouth will be stopped, and all the world stand guilty before God." The light of eternity will silence all our boasting of our own righteous-Who will dare to say, My own robe was fair and rich enough to appear before the King, when he shall come to judge the secrets of all hearts? O ye that reject the righteousness of Christ, and spurn the doctrine of justification by faith, however fair may be your character, when God shall show himself in all his spotless purity and awful justice, when he shall display the law in all the extent of its demands, you will be struck dumb. Confounded at the sight of your own utter unrighteousness, you will curse your own pride and folly, which rejected a robe that would adom an angel, to wear filthy rags that might make a beggar blush. " If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" Our Redeemer exhibits no long disputation; and be assured that the judgment will make short work. Conscience will rise up against you, and convince you of sin. You will then say to your own righteousness, "Get thee hence, thou polluted garment!" God, the Judge, will have the whole court, and even the prisoner at the bar, on his side, "that he may be justified when he speaks, and be clear when he judges." Then followed,

3. The execution. "Bind him hand and foot," said the king, "and cast him into outer darkness."

Here, again, we should not suppose that the same servants who had been the messengers of mercy to invite the guests, were employed to execute judgment. Thanks be to God for sending us to you with a message of salvation, and saving us from the sad necessity of punishing the neglect of our embassy! How could we, who have sought to burst your bonds of sin, bind you with fetters of wrath? Could we, who have laboured to allure you into the guest chamber, cast you into

the burning lake? Bound "hand and foot" is a phrase employed to express helplessness. In this state sinners will be found, when God shall deal with them in judgment. "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?" The casting into outer darkness alludes to the custom of celebrating marriage feasts at night. Those who were turned out of the festive hall, were, on going out of doors, enveloped in the shades of night. Alas, the darkness into which sinners go, when the Judge shall say to them, "Depart," is more dreary than that which Egypt knew and felt, when Israel's offended God withdrew from her the abused light of day. It is the blackness of a night that penetrates the soul, spreads a gloom over the conscience, and is followed by no dawn. That weeping and gnashing of teeth express the sorrow and agony of the man, we all see; but whether the latter alludes to the effect of the cold of the night, which makes the teeth chatter, or to the extremity of pain, which causes men to grind their teeth with anguish, I will not say. These, you are aware, are images of misery designed to alarm us. God grant that they may produce their proper effect!

When the king shall come, at last, for detection and judgment, his sentence will be irreversible. In vain will men then "cry to rocks and hills to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb." But it is not so now. If this parable shall have discovered to any one that he is destitute of the wedding robe, let him hear, too, the voice that invites him to put it on; for he who is "the Lord our righteousness" declares that he rejects none that come to him for justification. Reflect on your condition. See, on the one hand, your destitution of Christ's righteousness, and, on the other, the insufficiency of your own. Anticipate the dread day of discovery, and entreat God to search and try you now, while the pangs of detection may be followed by the joys of salvation. Embrace the proffered blessing; for the righteousness of one, the free gift, comes upon all that believe, "to justification of life." In this robe you may sit safe and blessed at the festive board. The eye of God shall behold no iniquity in those who are in Christ.

This is the promise of the new and better covenant, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins will I remember no more." Why will you expose yourselves to a trial that you cannot endure? Unavailing will be your regrets, when this righteousness shall no more be extended to you, as your hope and refuge, as the robe of salvation and the garment of joy.

Our Redeemer closes the parable thus: "Many are called,

but few are chosen."

When we think of the immense grace of Christ's invitation, we are ready to exclaim, Surely every one must accept the offer. We find, however, that they do not, and then we reflect on the depravity of man. How utterly alienated is his heart from God and every thing good! Then, on the other hand, when our minds are filled with these thoughts, we wonder that any embrace Christ and are saved. Here, therefore, we are reminded why so many are lost, and why any are saved. If you look at those who are under the sound of the Gospel, they are said to be called; for though this word sometimes means the effectual work which the voice of God produces, when it speaks to the heart in conversion, here it signifies only the external admonition of the Gospel. But this comes in the form of a call, saying, "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Our message is an invitation. We are not to preach before you, but to you; to invite you to Christ. We are charged to assure you of life, if you accept his invitation, and to warn you of the wrath to come, if you refuse him that speaketh from heaven. Our mission is to the "many;" though, alas, our success is with the "few." Who are they? The chosen. "The election obtains" the blessing. These are conscious that, like others, they were at first deaf to the inviting voice of God. But another power saved them from themselves; another mind sprang up in their breasts, and they say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

The application of this parable warns us against the entire rejection of religion, and exhorts us to guard against a false profession. Often have we been invited, with the assurance, "all things are ready." The Saviour has been made flesh he has completed his obedience to the law, in our place; he has offered his life a sacrifice, the just for the unjust; the victim has been accepted; his blood was carried into the holy place; it there pleads aloud; the Spirit has been deposited with him for the church; there is nothing wanting now, but that you should believe, and heaven is your own. With equal promptitude and indifference, many say, "Well, if it is all ready for me, I am sure I am ready for it." The parable, however, says, they did not choose to come. How many show, by their conduct, that this sentence was intended for them! Some, indeed, have invented the strange notion, that they are ready, but that Christ and his salvation are not. My text utterly contradicts this compliment, which we pay to ourselves, at the expense of heaven, and says, "all things are ready," except those who were invited, and they do not choose to come.

Why? With regard to many, it is such a trifle in their esteem, that "they make light of it." They literally turn into joke the whole subject of religion and their own eternal salvation. They laugh at the idea of a man's being among the righteous; and the very word saint provokes their scorn. They ridicule the employments of heaven, as fit to please only children, and sport with the pains of hell, as the mere bugbears of superstition. Yet they profess to believe in a future state of existence, and in a moral retribution. O that you believed your own creed! Say, what must, in your own estimation, be the rewards and punishments of eternity, and act accordingly; for then you will no longer make light of the Gospel.

But the necessity of guarding against a false profession is shown in the man who came to the feast, and was cast out to a place of torment. Were there only one such person in existence, we ought to watch, lest it should be said, "Thou art the man." For what horror must attend the detection of hypocrisy in a state of existence that admits no remedy! I close, as Christ did, by saying, "of the called there are many, but of the chosen there are few."

LECTURE XXXVI.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

MATT. XXIV. MARK XIII. LUKE XXI.

"THE Lord God will do nothing, but he will reveal it to his servants the prophets," is an assurance of the divine word, which at once displays the condescension of God, his love to his people, and the value of the prophetic writings. But works of vengeance are especially revealed; because God executes justice in mercy, always warning before he wounds. How fully and clearly was the first destruction of Jerusalem and its temple predicted in the Old Testament! We have now to show that the same course was adopted, when the city and temple that rose upon the ruins of the former, were to be destroyed. The denunciation of the wicked husbandmen, we have heard; and that of the Scribes and Pharisees, without a parable, would have claimed a distinct Lecture, had not the same subject already occupied our attention.* The great Prophet now lays open to our view the approaching fate of the city, and temple, and nation of the Jews.

I. The introductory prediction concerns the temple.

Our Saviour had cleansed the sacred place a second, or even a third time; but all in vain. He abandons it to its pollutions, and goes out for ever. With this narrative, the first two chapters at the head of this Lecture commence. The former part of the prophecy on which we are entering,

was delivered as Christ was quitting the temple, though the latter was uttered by him while sitting on the Mount of Olives. Having said, "Behold your house is left to you desolate," the attention of the disciples was drawn towards the house of prayer; and, with a true Jewish fondness for their splendid temple, not, perhaps, without some portion of Jewish unbelief, they point and say to their master, "See what stones! and what buildings!" Josephus expatiates largely on the immense size of the stones with which the second temple was built. Modern travellers agree in expressing their astonishment at the enormous size of some of the stones which lie at the foundation of ancient buildings in Syria, such as those of Balbec and Tadmor. The wealth and power of princes seem to have been lavished in laying masses of rock, rather than single stones, in the foundation of royal and sacred edifices. The captives who returned from Babylon can scarcely be supposed equal to such works; but Josephus ascribes these massive foundations to the power and magnificence of Herod, who may be said to have rebuilt the temple.

The Apostles exclaim, "What buildings!" for though we speak of the temple as one, that term is applied to a suite of buildings, in the midst of which stood the temple, strictly so called, as a central chapel, of moderate dimensions, though the courts and the chambers of the priests were most magnificent and extensive. Josephus luxuriates in the description, as if he were joining the Apostles in the exclamation, "Master, see what buildings!" On looking up from the foot of the hill on which Jerusalem stood, and still more, on looking down from the pinnacle of the temple to the vale below, the height appeared dreadful; while the splendour of the white marble, and of the ornaments of gold, was most striking. Luke mentions the gifts, or votive offerings, which were consecrated to God in the temple, and formed an important addition to its wealth and glory.

Instead, however, of joining in the admiration of the Apostles, Christ replied, in a tone that must have mortified and

surprised them. As if he would reprove their worldly taste, that doted on fine buildings, he seems to say, "Yes; I see them: do you see all these things? I tell you there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." At that moment, nothing could have been more improbable. The Jews were already conquered by the Romans, and were living under the government of that people, who had not destroyed the temple; for it was their policy not to insult, but to respect and protect the worship of the conquered nations. What, then, could be expected to induce these masters of the world to do what Christ foretold? Was not their empire honoured, by containing within one of its conquered provinces a temple which was the wonder of the world? Titus thought so, and gave this reason for wishing to spare the sacred edifice, even after the unexpected rebellion of the Jews made it necessary to retake the city. But, in spite of himself, the Roman commander saw the prodigy of magnificence destroyed, rather by the hands that should have protected it, than by those of their foes. The son of Vespasian, far from urging on, wept over the desolation, which he wished to prevent. Josephus says, "some towers were left, to be standing memorials of former magnificence, and of the power of the destroyer;" but either these were no part of the temple of which Christ spake, or they were afterwards thrown down. For destruction after destruction came upon this place; and though some have observed, that, as the act of building is expressed by laying stone upon stone, nothing more may be intended, by leaving not one stone upon another, than the mere fact of demolition; yet Hadrian is said to have digged up the foundations of Jerusalem. Julian, also, wishing to make Christ's words false, determined to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, and set the Jews to work in digging up the foundations of the former edifice, in order to prepare for the new erection. But when the words of Christ had been still further fulfilled, by the very attempt to confute them, the rebuilding of the temple was prevented, some say by divine prodigies, but certainly by the death of Julian, in

his Persian war. Whatever may be said of the means, or the period of the fulfilment of this prophecy; we ask, "Is there a stone of the far-famed temple now left?"

II. The principal prophecy concerning the city and the nation.

Foretelling the fate of the temple, as he quitted it, our Redeemer was perhaps overheard by those who charged him with saying, "I will destroy this temple." A similar accusation was brought against Stephen, Acts vi. 13, 14. The next day, sitting on the mount of Olives, just where Titus afterwards pitched his camp for the last fatal siege, our Lord took, as it were, a farewell look at these cloud-capped towers, and gorgeous edifices, that were so soon to fall. The disciples, Peter and James, and John and Andrew, knowing that it was considered treason to speak of such things, came to him privately, and asked, "When shall this be, and what shall be the sign?" To this, Matthew adds, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" This has induced many to conclude that we have here a prediction of the last judgment. We have no reason to suppose with some, that the disciples imagined the world would come to an end when the temple should be destroyed. And if they did. would Christ have fostered that false notion, by mixing up with a prophecy of the fate of the temple, one concerning the last day? We may rather conclude that the evangelist Mark gives their whole meaning, "When shall all these things be fulfilled," which thou hast spoken of the destruction of the temple? Luke, who wrote in the order in which his gospel stands, and may be considered, often, as an expositor of those who went before, gives us the complete view of their inquiry in these words, "When shall these things be, and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" If the additional words of Matthew introduced a new inquiry, and Christ replied to it, by foretelling the end of the world; would the other two evangelists have omitted the question, and yet have given the prophecy that formed the answer? The words of Matthew, therefore, merely expand the same inquiry, "What shall be the sign of thy coming to judge the

Jews, and destroy their temple, and city, and state; and what shall be the sign of the end of the present age, or Jewish dispensation?" It is surprising that so many should have thought of any thing else here, when the Apostle applies the same expression, "the end of the world," to Christ's appearing in order to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.* Instead, therefore, of entering into the question, which has so strangely perplexed expositors—where does Christ pass to the prediction of the last judgment day? I shall endeavour to show that he confines himself entirely to the fate of the Jews, in the following order.

1. The appearance of false Christs is foretold, v. 4, 5. "Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many;" to which Luke adds, that they will say, "The time draws near." As our Lord told the Jews, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye will not receive me; if another should come in his own name, him ye will receive;" so John, in his epistle, declares "there are many antichrists, by which we know that it is the last time." Josephus records, that, during the government of Felix, the whole country was filled with receptacles of robbers, and with deceitful pretenders who cajoled the unskilful vulgar; impostors and magicians drew crowds into the deserts, promising to show them divine prodigies.+ In his history of the Jewish war, the same writer says, " Seducers, under the appearance of religion, introduced novelties with which they made the populace mad, alluring them into the deserts by promises that God would give them signs of liberty; but Felix, sending his troops, destroyed multitudes.‡ We read also, Acts v. 36, 37, "Before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away

much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed." An Egyptian, also, about the year 55 of the Christian era, gave occasion to the question of the Roman governor to Paul, Acts xxi. 38, "Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?"

2. National convulsions were the next sign of the approaching judgment; v. 6, 7. "When ye shall hear of wars already raging, and rumours of others arising, be not excessively troubled, as if the end would immediately come, for it shall not be yet." The Romans did not immediately march against Jerusalem, but employed themselves, for a considerable time, in subduing the remotest parts of the country; and, during this period, the revolutions in the Roman government itself so rapidly succeeded each other, that the empire was filled with alarming rumours.

"Nation shall rise against nation." The national feuds that were kindled among the Jews seemed to declare that they were determined to make all nations their enemies.* The reaction followed, and the inhabitants of Cesaræa, Scythopolis, Alexandria, and Damascus, rose up against the Jews,

and slaughtered them by thousands.

"There shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places." The earthquakes that happened at this time are mentioned by historians. † Eusebius says, in his Chronicles, that, in the fourth year of Nero, there was a great earthquake in Rome; and, two years after, a similar occurrence in Asia, when, by the overthrow of the cities of Laodicea, Heraclis, and Calapha, some thousands of persons perished. That famines should follow such convulsions of nature and of nations as now abounded, was natural; and we read, accordingly, in the Acts, that the distresses of the Christians in Judea induced the churches, in other parts of the world, to send help to those from whom the Gospel first emanated. Pestilence usually follows in the train of famine, as the want

^{*} Josephus de Bello, lib. 1, cap. 11.

of wholesome food leaves men to feed on what is pernicious. Then come what are called troubles, disturbances of mind, fearful forebodings, aggravated by signs from heaven, strange portents, such as are related by Josephus—a comet, like a sword, hanging over the devoted city—appearances of conflicting armies in the skies—the massive gate of the temple opening of its own accord—a man, who was thought to be afflicted with melancholy madness, crying, "Woe to the city," in spite of all the tortures employed to compel him to desist, till a stone from the battering engines of the besiegers struck him dead. While the fearful sights and great signs really happened, no doubt the people were thrown into that state of mind which magnifies ordinary events into miracles, and gives credence to the fallacies of inventors. These were the beginnings of sorrows, and were followed by,

3. Religious persecutions, a most decisive token of judgment: v. 8.

Luke records Christ's warning, that, before all these things, Christians should be persecuted. See the Apostles, and especially Paul, cited before the rulers, and beaten in the synagogue. The martyrdom of Stephen was the signal for a general crusade against the disciples of the cross. Before Felix and Festus, Agrippa and Nero, Christians were called to answer for believing in Christ, and preaching his Gospel; as if these were the foulest crimes. The disciples of Christ were hated of all men for his name's sake; for the heathen writers seem ambitious of showing how literally this prophecy was fulfilled, when they call the Christian religion a superstition hateful and hostile to the human race.

To the Apostles, the prospect of such citations before the councils of the learned, and the tribunals of the mighty, must have been alarming, prompting them to ask, "How shall we, obscure illiterate men, behave and speak before such personages?" Christ, therefore, forbids these solicitudes, charging them not to meditate beforehand what they should say. Not that he would have them to be reckless of his honour, or their own testimony; but these were

better provided for by a superior power. "It shall be given you, in that hour, what you shall speak; for it is not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost." "I will give you," says Christ, "a mouth and wisdom that all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." We have seen this fulfilled, when the Jewish Sanhedrim was struck with "the boldness of Peter and John;" and when Felix, the governor, trembled before Paul the prisoner. This gives no sanction to preaching without premeditation; but cheers the persecuted Christian in the prospect of appearance before hostile governors and kings.

The most alarming part of the prediction is yet to come; for "brother shall betray brother to death, and the father the son." To this day, the Jews quench all natural affections in their hatred of the Gospel of Christ. Amidst the Christians themselves, also, false prophets arose. Simon Magus, after being baptised, is said to have become a pestilent heresiarch; and Paul warned the disciples at Miletus, of those who would arise "speaking perverse things." "Even now," says John, "there are many deceivers, who went out from us, because they were not of us." Some of these adulterated the Gospel, to escape the persecution of the cross, when they saw how the Jews raged against the doctrine of justification by faith without works of law. "Because iniquity abounded, the love of many waxed cold." In times of persecution, Christ appears with his fan in his hand, to blow away the chaff. To such an extent did the iniquities of the Jews abound, as their destruction drew near, that Josephus says, "If the Romans had not come upon the guilty city, God would have sent an earthquake to swallow it up, or have destroyed it, like Sodom, with fire from heaven."

But, amidst all these foes without, and declensions and treacheries within, Christ says to his disciples, "In your patience possess ye your souls." Do not be deprived of your right minds, or be driven by impatience into desperate counsels, but calmly pursue the even tenor of your way; for "there shall not a hair of your head perish." The manner in which the church was preserved, amidst the horrible

judgments of those times, has excited the admiration of the faithful in every subsequent age. There were "some who endured to the end, and were saved."

4. The universal preaching of the Gospel was the next precursor of the fall of Jerusalem: v. 14.

This, which is recorded in a different order by two Evangelists, and not at all by Luke, was evidently intended by our Lord to cheer the Apostles; who might naturally have said, "If the world be thus in arms against us, how can we fulfil our commission?" In the face of all opposition, says Jesus, the Gospel shall be preached. The messengers may be thrown into prisons and chains, but "the word of God is not bound." The heralds may be killed, but "the word of the Lord endureth for ever." The fulfilment of this prediction is asserted in the letters of Paul to the churches. Coloss. i. 26; Romans x. 18.

The enemies themselves seem anxious to prove Christ's words true, when they accuse the Apostles of "turning the world upside down;" and say of Paul, that he "persuaded men every where, that they were no gods that were made with hands." This was, as the Lord foretold, a testimony to the unwearied diligence and fearless fidelity of the Apostles, and a witness against both Jew and Gentile, who were rendered inexcusable, when they rejected a message sealed with the blood of the martyred heralds. The rapid march of the Gospel was the occasion of the fierce persecution that came upon Christians. It was not the mere theory of their religion; for that men would have borne, as a harmless speculation; but it was the undaunted resolution and unquenchable zeal, with which the message from heaven was pressed upon the attention of men, as essential to their eternal peace. The persecution which this provoked, brought destruction on the Jews.

When the Apostles had so generally published the Gospel, that Christian churches were planted among the Gentile nations, God determined to pluck up by the roots the Jewish nation, which was a stumbling block, by exciting open persecution in some instances, and by corrupting with pharisaic

additions in others, the pure Gospel of the grace of God. The grand question that was fiercely agitated—whether the Mosaic rites were obligatory on Christians—God decided; first, by giving the epistle to the Hebrews, and then by destroying the temple and nation, which rendered the observance of the Mosaic law impossible. The fathers pressed upon the attention of the Jews the accomplishment of these words of Christ. Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, p. 270, says, "There is no people upon the earth to whom the name of Christ is not made known."

5. The approach of the Roman armies was the next sign of impending ruin: v. 15.

Time was, when, at an advancing army, "the daughter of Zion shook her head, and laughed them to scorn." For her prophet said, "They shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow at her." But now the oracle of heaven utters far different responses. Matthew and Mark are expounded by Luke; the first says, "When ye, therefore, see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place;" the second says, "stand where it ought not;" and the third evangelist gives the sense of both the others, in the words, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed by armies." The Hebrew idiom, "abomination of desolation," may mean either the desolating abomination. or the abominable desolation; for sometimes the governing substantive stands in the place of an adjective, and sometimes the governed. Either sense will suit the passage before us, which refers most literally to Dan. xii. 11. But, as far as we can ascertain the sense of that difficult chapter, it does not refer to this subject. In Dan. ix. 26, 27, the phrase virtually occurs, and the subject of Christ's present prediction is clearly spoken of. It was for the crime of killing the son. the heir, that the king sent forth his armies and destroyed the wicked husbandmen, and burned up their city. Now, Daniel says, within so many years from "the rebuilding of the city, Messiah shall be cut off; and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and to the end of the war desolations are determined, and

for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate." As the Hebrew uses the expression, "upon the wing of abominations," the classical scholar would naturally think of the Roman eagle, with outstretched wing, on the standards of the Roman army, which desolated the country. But as the Hebrews use wing for any extremity, so it was ordained that the battlements at the extremity of the city should be occupied by the idols, which formed the Roman ensigns, and which the Jews commonly termed abominations. In this prophecy of Daniel, it is clear that we have the two expressions, "abomination," and "desolation," in connexion with the coming of the Romans, to destroy Jerusalem. These are called "the people of the prince," a remarkable phrase, but exactly expressive of that peculiarity which distinguished these conquerors from all others. For in other cases the people were nothing, and the prince or commander was every thing. Among the Romans, however, the standard bore the inscription S P Q R, senatus populusque Romanorum; the senate and people of the Romans. leader in this war was not a king; Vespasian not being yet raised to the purple, when the war commenced, and Titus, who finished it, being but a prince-commander under his father. The avenging power that God employed, was, therefore well designated by "the people of the prince."

But it has been much disputed what was the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel. Various things in the history of the last war of Judea, have given rise to answers which have specious appearances of adaptation to this phrase. Pilate shocked the prejudices of the Jews, by introducing among them the symbols of Roman idolatry; and Caligula, setting up for a god, ordered his statue, or image, to be erected in Jerusalem. But some have applied the prophet's words to the villanies of the priests, who officiated in the holy of holies; and others to the destructive crimes of the zealots, who obtained possession of the temple as a fortress. The great objection to many of these interpretations is, that they either apply to things which had already happened, before Christ uttered these words, or to things which occurred

too long before the fall of the city, to serve as warnings to the Christians, to take their flight. We have, therefore, already hinted that the true interpretation of the words which Matthew and Mark give, from the lips of Christ, is furnished by Luke, who, writing after the others, might be expected to make the sign more plain, as the time drew near, when it was to be the means of safety to the church of Christ in Jerusalem. Luke's record is this: "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh;" as if he would say, "this is the abomination that maketh desolate." That the Jews should regard the Roman armies as an abomination was natural. This was the hateful force that crushed their national independence; this was the idolatrous power that carried in its standards the images of false gods, those abominations in the eyes of a Jew-Jove, Mars, Venus, and Romulus, who was made the tutelary deity of Rome; this was the victorious host that consummated the desolation of the Jewish capital, and temple, and state. When, therefore, a Roman army encompassed the city, it stood in the holy place, where it ought not to have been seen, and where it would not have been found if the holy city had not become a harlot. The desolating army first pitched its camp, at the wing, or extremity of the holy place, till, as it advanced its works, and carried on its approaches, it came into the temple itself, and at last, the holy of holies was profaned, plundered, and burned. The approach of this army was to be to the Christians, the signal for flight. It is not every siege that ends in capturing a city, especially when strongly fortified by nature and art, as Jerusalem was; nor is it every capture of a city that ends in its utter desolation. Christ, however, informed his disciples, that, when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with a besieging army, they might be sure its end was nigh.

By calling Daniel a prophet, our Lord brands with the mark of error, the conduct of the Jews, who, to evade the force of Daniel's prophecies, speak degradingly of his inspiration. Christ, by saying, "Whoso readeth, let him understand," shows the difficulty and importance of penetrating the true

meaning of this prophecy. The attention of Christians was thus turned to the warning now given, to flee out of Jerusalem, as Lot out of Sodom. They who were in Judea should escape to the mountains; and they who were in the city should quit it in such haste, that if they were on the house top, they should not come down to take any thing out of the house; for they had a way from the roof into the street. If they were in the field, they should not go back into the house; for, instead of entering the city for safety, as was common in war time, they should regard the fortified rock of Jerusalem as the place of danger.

It is well known that the disciples of Christ so clearly understood this warning, as to make the use of it which he intended.* Simeon, the son of James, and successor to the brother of our Lord, in the pastoral care of the Christian church at Jerusalem, fled, with his flock, from the devoted city, and from the territory of the Jews, into the mountainous dominions of King Agrippa, who firmly adhered to the Romans. A city of Decapolis, called Pella, is said to have received the church of Jerusalem. This flight our Lord anticipated, as the following words intimate, "Woe to those who are with child, and that give suck in those days;" for they would be unfit for hasty emigration, and exposed to the fury of those who spared neither age nor sex. For similar reasons, he bids them "pray that their flight might not be in the winter," which would increase the difficulties and pains of the exile. In answer to their prayers, the event happened in spring, at the feast of passover. They were charged, also, to pray that their flight might not be on the sabbath day; but as the Jewish sabbath was abolished by Christ, we consider the title of sabbath day to be here given to the Lord's day. It would have been an additional trial to the Christian church, to be compelled to exchange the devotion and repose of the sacred day for the fatigues and secular cares of flight. This also shows that Christ's friends would not flee so far as to be many days, or weeks, on the road; but in one day they fled to Pella.

^{*} Euseb. iii. cap. 5.

6. The destruction itself is announced, as following the signs already given: v. 21.

The siege of the city by the Babylonians, though awfully severe, was not to be mentioned on the same day with this final calamity; nor had any thing like it happened to any single nation, from the creation. The deluge was, indeed, a dreadful calamity, but it was universal, and did not mark out one people alone as an object of wrath. It is consoling to be assured, that there never shall be any thing so terrible as this which befell the Jews. Their sin was peculiar to them, that of crucifying the Son of God, and so was their punishment. Josephus says,* "God, who had condemned this people, turned every way of escape into destruction; and such was its affliction as had not been from the beginning of the world." If the destruction had gone on as it raged for some time, no creature among the Jews could have survived; but God had a chosen people among them, and "for the elect's sake, the days were shortened," so that the whole nation was not cut off, notwithstanding the numbers that miserably perished. Josephus says, "The distress that was upon that nation sets at defiance all power of rhetoric;" and their own historian ascribes their unparalleled fate to the wrath of God. "They fell by the edge of the sword," to the amount of millions. Others "were led away captive;" so that it is said, that the colisæum at Rome, the most stupendous monument of human art and power, was the work of Jewish slaves, brought to grace the triumph of the conqueror, when he erected that arch, on which was sculptured the table of shew bread, and the golden candlestick. The number doomed to slavery was so great, that they were sent to all markets, and were found among all nations. Jerusalem has been ever since trodden down of the Gentiles. Hadrian built a new city, which he called Elia, but it is thought to have been on a different site; and what is now called Jerusalem, and by the Arabs, the holy city, has never been a city of Jews; but has been trodden down by the Gentiles, trampled upon as an inferior place, and has been for ages under the dominion of the Mahomedans.

^{*} Josephus de Bello, lib. vi. cap. 15.

Thus it shall be, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, to which Paul seems to allude, Romans xi. I know no other times of the Gentiles mentioned in Scripture, but that of their full conversion to the faith of Christ, which seems to be the sense given to the Saviour's words by the Apostle Paul, when he says, "Till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Then shall this spot cease to be degraded, as it has been; and the Jew being converted, as well as the full harvest of the Gentiles gathered in, the Jews shall no longer be excluded from the site of their ancient capital, for "there shall be one Lord, and his name one, in all the earth." Come, day of Israel's restoration! For, if the diminishing of them was the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness!

The warnings against deceivers, Christ now repeats. It is well known, that when Jerusalem was about to fall, many pretenders to messiahship arose, announcing the speedy interposition of heaven for their deliverance, and thus keeping up resistance to the Romans till it proved fatal. The signs and wonders they showed were the creation of the fanatical zealots, some of whom called the people to look for deliverance from without, from the desert, whence they said the deliverer would come and attack the Romans while busied in the siege. Others promised salvation from the secret conclave, where the zealots plotted against the foe. Such were the deceptive powers kept in continual operation, that, "if it had been possible, even the elect had been deceived." Josephus says, "Titus wondered, when he saw the fortifications, that he had been able to take the city in five months, declaring that a God must have deprived the Jews of such a protection."

But he that made bare his arm for judgment, said, "Destroy not the nation, for a blessing is in it." There was a chosen seed, a remnant according to the election of grace. Some of the younger part of that very generation were probably converted by means of this judgment; and some that should descend from them were chosen to salvation. "Blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved, as it is

written, There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant to them when I shall take away their sins." "As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake."

A passage follows which is almost identical with that recorded by Luke in his 11th chapter, so that he does not give it here. Our Saviour advises his disciples not to go out to see, when it shall be said during the last war, "Lo! here is the deliverer; or, Lo! there." He assures them that his coming shall be like the lightning, shining from east to west; or, as Luke says, "from one part under heaven to the other." The Saviour's coming to execute judgment on the Jews shall be no secret affair, not slow and gradual, so as to require any to go out to see; but sudden and manifest, like the electric flash. The inhabitants of the old world were overtaken suddenly by the flood, and the men of Sodom, by fire from heaven; and "thus shall it be, in the day when the Son of man is revealed." They who heard this, exclaimed, "Where, Lord?" He answered, "Wherever the body is, there will the cagles be gathered together." This seems to be employed as a proverbial expression, derived, perhaps, from the book of Job,* "Doth the eagle mount up at thy command?" "Her young ones suck up blood; and where the slain are, there is she."

The site of Jerusalem is exhibited as a field of battle, covered with the slain, and the birds of prey are seen hovering round, to devour, as the fowls of heaven are called round the mystic Babylon, to the supper of the great day of the wrath of Almighty God. The Roman eagle in the standard of Titus has naturally been thought of by commentators; but it is doubtful whether any thing more is meant than, that Jerusalem, and, indeed, the whole Jewish people, are represented as a slain carcase, lying in the field, where the eagles, or the vultures, are seen snuffing up blood and ready to pounce upon the slain.

^{*} Job xxxix. 27, 30.

7. The consequent extinction of the Jewish nation; v. 29.

Here, as some suppose, Christ makes a transition to the last judgment day, and the end of the world. But it is remarkable, that our Redeemer introduces this passage by saying, "immediately after the tribulation of those days," which is surely pointing out the *immediate* consequence of the destruction of Jerusalem. Luke's gospel says, "there shall be signs in the moon, and the sun, and the stars;" but the words of Matthew and Mark are, "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven." These strong expressions have given rise to the opinion, that the last day, as the wreck of nature, is here foretold. But as the things here mentioned are to happen "immediately" after the destruction of Jerusalem, our Lord must be understood to use the language of prophecy, which is peculiar and has idioms of its own. Sun and moon and stars, in the prophetic dialect, mean princes and potentates and magistrates, as may be seen in the book of Revelation. The Apostle Paul has given us a clue to the interpretation of our Lord's words, in Hebrews xii. 25; "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: whose voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, Yet once more, I shake not earth only, but also heaven."

The words of Peter should have prepared us for this interpretation; "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: and it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come." Acts ii. 16—20.

In these two passages, the shaking of the heavens and the earth, and the passing away of the things shaken, the sun

being darkened, and the moon turned into blood, signify great political and moral changes, the passing away of a former dispensation of religion, the destruction of opposing powers, and their total fall from their high places. Thus, in the prophecies of Daniel, Antiochus Epiphanes is exhibited as the little horn of the beast that cast down the host of heaven, and trampled upon them; because he overthrew the worship of God, and shut up the temple, making "the daily oblation to cease." After the destruction of Jerusalem, then, the Jewish national polity was to be destroyed, which was to the pride of Israel as the blotting out of the sun from the firmament. With the civil state, fell the ecclesiastical polity, which was like the extinction of the moon, that borrows its light from the greater luminary. The priests, who were in that church, as the stars, the angels, or ministers of the church, are among Christians, were cast down from their heaven.

It appeared to the Jews as if the frame of nature must be destroyed, when their city was crushed; and doubtless the vengeance that came upon them filled the other nations, whom the Romans had subdued, with dread of the vindictive wrath of the conqueror. Great convulsions among the nations are always accompanied with fearfulness in the public mind, a tendency to espy ill omens; and this, our Lord declares, should follow on the dreadful fall of Jerusalem, which seemed to shake the whole earth.

"Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man coming in the heavens, with power and great glory." That these words should, at first sight, be taken for a prediction of the coming of Christ for the last judgment, was natural. But the connexion of time which the words suggest, and the certainty that the preceding events were nothing else than the destruction of Jerusalem, together with the consideration that Christ gives no intimation of passing from one subject to another, compel me to conclude, that this, like the preceding passage, is but a bold employment of the prophetic style, such as we read in Isaiah xix. 1.

It has been seriously affirmed, that the sign of the cross

shall be seen in the sky, when the last day shall arrive; and Catholic writers have assured us, that the angels shall bring in procession the other instruments of Christ's passion. Luke says, "they shall see the Son of man coming;" for the sign means nothing more than indications of his approach, when he should come in judgment to destroy his murderers, and the stone which the builders refused should grind them to powder. Matthew and Mark say, "he shall send his angels to gather his elect from the uttermost part of heaven." The great trumpet mentioned by Matthew has been interpreted to mean the last trump of judgment; but there is nothing said here of the resurrection, nor is any thing more intended than the general and effective preaching of the Gospel, to call the chosen to the knowledge of Christ, immediately after the fall of Jerusalem; for that event delivered the church from its most bitter and active opponents, and doubtless the Christians improved so striking a fulfilment of their Lord's words to prove his Messiahship; so that the "fall of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles." Luke does not mention this part of the prediction, because he had already unfolded it in his 19th chapter.

Our Lord commands his disciples to view these events as indicative of summer, just as the budding of the fig-tree was. "Then lift up your heads," says he, "knowing that your redemption from your bitterest foes is come, and the kingdom of God, the reign of heaven, is nigh." John shortly after saw, in the apocalyptic vision, Christ going forth on a white horse, conquering and to conquer. Our interpretation of this passage is confirmed by these words,-"this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." Those who suppose that the last judgment is here foretold, are naturally embarrassed by this sentence. Some have said, that, by "this generation," the Jewish nation is intended. To avoid this forced interpretation, others have said, that the generation then living should not pass away before the first part of the prediction, which concerns Jerusalem, should be fulfilled. But Christ says, "all these things," which naturally leads us to think of every thing he had now foretold; so that we are

brought to the conclusion, that there is nothing mentioned in the whole discourse which would not happen before that generation was entirely extinct. Now the destruction of Jerusalem happened, about forty years from the time that our Lord spake. Those who were then twenty would be but sixty when Jerusalem fell. Great numbers, therefore, of that generation must have seen the dreadful catastrophe; for heaven and earth shall pass away, but Christ's words shall never pass unfulfilled.

The practical conclusion that Christ urges on his disciples sunk into their hearts, for their writings show how deeply serious these things made them, and how anxious they were that the judgments of God should produce a happy effect on the Christian church.

Our Lord subjoins a declaration that is attended with immense difficulty. It is given by the two former Evangelists only, Matthew xxiv. 36, and Mark xiii. 32. Such disputes arose concerning this passage, that one sect was denominated agnoetæ, the ignorant, on account of their maintaining, that Christ was ignorant of the day of judgment. It is naturally asked, why should Christ say, that "all things were delivered to him of the Father;" that he "knew the Father as the Father knew him?" and why should the disciples say to Christ, "Thou knowest all things," even after they had heard him utter these words, if we are to take them, as at first sight they seem to speak? Is there any thing so great in knowing the exact hour of these events which Christ has so minutely described, that the time should be concealed from him, even according to the hypothesis of those who make these words an argument against his divinity? Some, however, who maintain the deity of Christ, say, that, as a man, in his state of humiliation, he received only those communications from the Deity that were deemed necessary, and that this was not among them. There certainly is much truth in the statement, that, as a man, Christ was weak, and passible. and mortal, in fact, not infinite; therefore, limited in knowledge, in power, and in other attributes. But this interpretation does not suit the occasion; for why set this truth before

the eyes of the Apostles just now, and tell them that the Son was, as man, not infinite? Did they doubt it? I, therefore, think that the word " to know" is used here, as it unquestionably is in other passages of Scripture, in what the Hebrews would call the hiphil sense, to make known. When the Apostle says, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" he must employ the word in the same sense; for our knowledge is not subject to our will. What we know we must know, in spite of ourselves. The Apostle was here speaking of what he would teach among the Corinthians, and uses the word to know, in this sense, "I determined not to parade my knowledge of various mysteries and sciences, but to make known nothing among you, to preach nothing, but Christ, and him crucified." In like manner, he says, " Now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places is known," i.e. is made known, "by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." The question was not, what Christ knew, but what he would make known to the disciples, in answer to their request, " Lord, tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming." He, therefore, says, "You ask me to make known what no man announces, nor does any angel from heaven descend to tell it, nor has the Son come to declare this moment; but my Father shall make it known by the event. God, who shall bring the day and the hour, shall answer the question, by doing the thing in its appointed time." Thus, when the disciples met Christ again, they were not prevented by these words from saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time, restore again the kingdom to Israel?" and he answered, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power; but ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." These words seem to point to the same event spoken of here, and confirm the opinion, that it is not the day of judgment, but the hour of the destruction of Jerusalem, which Christ says he does not make known. It is true that he assured them that it should happen before that generation should have passed away; and Daniel, ix. 6, shows that it would not be long before it happened; but there was no approach to telling the day, or the hour; and so ignorant was the Christian church in Jerusalem, that it was roused to depart, only by the unexpected and unaccountable breaking up of the siege, which afforded an opportunity to flee to Pella. That the day found the Jews unprepared, we know; and this our Lord foretold, v. 39—42, Matthew.

To confirm the view here given, I would remind you that Luke, who wrote last, gives no intimation of any thing but the destruction of Jerusalem; and that some of the strongest expressions which have led commentators to think of the last judgment, are, in the 17th chapter of that evangelist, manifestly employed to set forth the coming of Christ's evangelical kingdom. There is not an expression that has been applied to the last judgment, that may not be shown to be employed by the prophets, to express national convulsions; and the declarations, "That all these things should be fulfilled before that generation, which Christ was addressing, should pass away," and that "immediately after the fall of Jerusalem, the sun and moon shall be darkened," admit of no fair application, but to the final catastrophe of the Jews. Is it probable that Christ would introduce a totally different subject, and intermingle it with the former, without giving any notice of such change of theme? John, who wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, omits, therefore, the whole prediction. It was not then needed; for the warning had already been, not only given, but taken.

To us, however, who still are exposed to times of danger and temptation, and who are looking forward to the great crisis of our history, death; the words of the kind and faithful monitor should be imperative. "Take ye heed, watch

and pray; for ye know not when the time is."

LECTURE XXXVII.

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS.

MATT. XXV. 1-13.

"BEHOLD the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." What, then, shall we never discern between the righteous and the wicked, till the great day of doom? Do we not now see the difference between the pious and the impious; between him that profaneth, and him that keepeth sacred the Lord's day; between him that sweareth, and him that feareth an oath? Yes, there is a broad line of distinction between all who set God and religion at defiance, and those who profess to fear him and live for eternity. But this is not enough; for, among those who profess to fear God, there are grand essential differences. Christ says to one, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead;" and it is among these that the dread day of judgment will make the fearful disclosure and the final separation. It is to this distinction among those who make a common profession of religion, that our Lord here directs our attention. What, then, can be more serious and alarming? What can demand more anxious attention from those who "profess to know God," lest it be said of them at last, "but in works they deny him?" Let us rouse our souls to the most serious faithful consideration of a parable, given with so important and benevolent designs. We are presented here with an original difference of character, a temporary similarity of conduct, and a final distinction of doom.

I. The original difference of character: v. 1, 2. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

Under the influence of that erroneous spirit which began early to creep into the church, the fathers said foolish things about these virgins, as if they were designed to sanction the nuns of the church of Rome, devoted to perpetual virginity. But some of the ancients saw clearly, that our Lord, having chosen to employ the imagery of a wedding, exhibits a custom like that which prevails among us, who invite bridemaids to attend the bride, as her companions and friends. The same observation might have prevented much of the folly displayed in comments on the number ten, and the division into two fives, which doubtless arose from the custom of the times, when such a number accompanied a bridal procession, arranged in two files, to sing, by response, the marriage odes, expressive of the praises of the wedded pair, and the good wishes of friends for their matrimonial happiness. These maidens who attended, according to the manners of the east, to light the bridegroom when he went at night to conduct the bride from her father's to her husband's house, our Lord employs to exhibit those who profess to be the friends of him who is styled the bridegroom of the church, which is called "the bride, the Lamb's wife." The division into two exact halves cannot prove that half of those who make a profession of piety are hypocrites, but the whole design of the parable is to show that some are; and this is the striking truth that should wake up our souls to jealousy, giving intense interest to this most beautiful parable, worthy to be studied with the searching light of conscience, rather than the sportive play of the imagination. Let us, then, proceed in the order in which our Saviour leads the way, and consider,

1. The foolish. For though the Redeemer first mentions

the wise, he first describes those that "took no oil with their lamps." Marriages among the eastern nations, as also among the Greeks and Romans, being celebrated after sunset, were accompanied with lamps and torches; which were considered so important, that the happiness of the married pair was supposed to depend upon them, to which our great poet alludes, in the well known apostrophe to marriage,

"Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights His constant lamp."

Our Saviour employs these lamps as symbols of a religious profession; for all who make it profess to love Christ, and "look for his appearing." But as some of these may have no real permanent principle of regard for him; he compares their religion to a lamp that is lighted up without any provision of oil to keep it burning; that is, they had no principle of permanence or perseverance. Now as the influence of divine grace, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart, is declared to be the spring of all enduring religion, we need not hesitate to say, the want of oil in the vessel signifies the want of grace in the heart. Without being hypocrites in the grossest sense, by making a profession which we know to be insincere, and by which we design to impose upon others, which is not the character intended to be exhibited here; a man may yet commence a profession which has no reality, and will not lead to eternal life. Eloquent appeals to our passions; alarms produced by awful events; or other causes; may lead to a profession of religion, where the grace of God has not renewed the heart. Of such persons we may say, as Jude of certain professors, "these are sensual, not having the Spirit." Yet the unregenerate man may appear fair to the eye of others; for there is scarcely any thing that meets the senses that may not be imitated, so that an Apostle said of Sylvanus, "he is a faithful brother, as I suppose." Ananias and Sapphira, in the primitive church, are exhibited as a standing proof that false professors may be found among the purest churches of Christ. Many may learn the theory of religion, may use the most correct language, may be attached, from inferior motives, to the fellowship of the saints, and may so put off the evil customs of the world, that it may be the duty of the church to receive them into its communion, on account of the credible profession which they make.

Still they are foolish virgins. For they trust to mere impressions on the imagination, or the passions, or to a general knowledge acquired by external means, and to their own resolutions, without that influence of the divine Spirit, which alone can cause us to endure to the end and obtain eternal life. For what is man at his best estate? He is altogether vanity; changeable as the moon. The best frames and feelings of men are altered by a thousand passing events; so that when you look forward, through the whole of a long life, to the effects of old age and sickness, a death-bed, and an eternal world, what a different creature will he appear at last who has nothing but himself to depend upon! And what will that religion do for us which cannot stand the test of time, and events, and death, and judgment? It is for these we profess to prepare, and therefore that religion is good for nothing that will not do us good, "when heart and flesh fail us." But it may be said, if all external marks of religion may be imitated, and we cannot safely commence a profession of religion without a certain secret, invisible, undefinable influence on the heart, (which influence we cannot command,) what a state of peril and anxiety are we placed in! I am aware how naturally this difficulty presents itself to some. But it admits of a very simple, satisfactory answer. For we may know, from our own experience, that we cannot depend upon ourselves; and from Scripture, that the grace of the Holy Spirit alone produces true permanent religion: our duty, therefore, is to cast ourselves upon that grace; and if we do so, we may be conscious of it, and thus may be assured that we are not deceiving ourselves, and that our hope shall never make us ashamed. For whoever trusts the grace of the Holy Spirit is under his influences.

2. The wise are next exhibited as having "taken oil in their vessels with their lamps." If we allow ourselves

minutely to allegorise, we shall say, that this lamp also signifies a religious profession; for though some, dreading a false profession, take to themselves credit for making none at all, this is not the conduct of the wise, nor even of all the foolish virgins. On the contrary, "if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." If we own not our Lord before men, neither will he own us before his Father. But a wise profession is furnished with a provision for its perseverance, its perpetuity, its continuance to eternity. Aware that their profession, at the present moment, is chiefly valuable as a public expression of the divine influence over the heart, the wise turn their eyes inward, to the secret springs of action, and cannot rest without such a state of mind and heart as shall secure right conduct in every future stage of existence, even when the world shall be burned up, and eternity shall set its seal on all things. For this, therefore, they watch and pray, asking that Holy Spirit, which our heavenly Father is more ready to give to him that asketh than parents are to give bread to their starving children. They enter fully into Christ's words, "If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest ask of him, and he would give thee living water;" for "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life." There is the principle of perpetuity in religion, the only perennial spring of right views, holy affections, obedient conduct, immortal hopes. The Spirit is promised to abide with us for ever; and as the promises are not to supersede, but encourage prayer, the perpetual, anxious cry of all sincere believers is, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me; but uphold me with thy free Spirit." "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." To wake up our consciences to deep self-research, our Lord uttered this parable; and we should, at the very outset, improve it to this purpose, "searching ourselves, proving ourselves, whether Christ dwelleth

in us," by his Spirit, or whether we are reprobates. Then only are we wise to salvation, when we trust not in ourselves, nor attempt to rise on paper wings to the heights of heaven, but, casting ourselves on the power and grace of Christ, hear him say, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in thy weakness;" and then reply, "I will glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest on me; for when I am weak," that is, feel that I am so in myself, "then am I strong." "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." "The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles; shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint."

The next object of attention is,

II. The temporary similarity of conduct; "while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." v. 5, 6.

The bridegroom is supposed to have tarried longer in the house of the bride's father than was expected, so that the attendant virgins were kept waiting at the door; for as a "maid cannot forget her adorning, nor a bride her attire," the dressing of the married lady was so anxiously performed as to delay the procession, till one common infirmity seized all the attendants, who were, therefore, all waked up by one common cry.

1. They were all overtaken by one common infirmity; "they all slumbered and slept."

It was night, which disposes to sleep, and on a wedding day they may be supposed to have been up earlier than usual; so that they are said to have nodded, which is the exact meaning of the first word; but the last signifies that they fell into dead sleep.* What has been said of Christ's coming when the inhabitants of the world will be literally asleep, because it

^{*} Νευσταζειν may be intended to apply to the wise virgins, to show that they were but sleepy; and $\kappa\alpha\theta\epsilon\nu\delta\epsilon\iota\nu$ to the foolish, to exhibit them as fast asleep.

shall be midnight, is unwise. This cannot be the case with the whole world, at the last day; since it is mid-day at one side of the earth when it is midnight at the other. Nor is there any moral evil in being literally asleep at midnight, which was designed for rest. But something sinful is intended by the slumbers of the virgins. There are, in the church, as well as in the world, seasons of drowsiness; but in the former it is more evil, as we are bound to be awake and watchful, knowing "neither the day nor the hour when our Lord cometh." In the present state of existence, such are the changes that come over even the most pious, as well as the mere professor, that all souls sometimes seem laid to sleep, and you cannot clearly distinguish between the one and the other. Who can discern between the wise man and the fool, when they are both asleep? A genuine Christian, in a dull drowsy state, appears, alas! too much like a mere pretender to religion. It is true, the lamps of the wise were not actually gone out, while those of the foolish were; but then, when a light is dull, and wants trimming, it looks little better than one that has expired, and emits smoke instead of light; and if we suppose the wise to be represented as only sleepy, they would look too much like the foolish, who were asleep.

If we apply this to the last judgment, of which Christ seems to speak, it may show that there will not be a general wakeful expectation of that event, even in the church, of which state of things some intimations seem to be given in Scripture, and, therefore, the pious will be then off their guard, and their profession will be like an untrimmed lamp. But as our Saviour evidently intended this discourse to benefit his disciples in all ages, not merely among those who shall live in the last days, but in times long before the end of all things, we must apply this to the approach of death. Then our Lord comes to us, when he calls us hence to himself, by the departure of our souls from the body. Thus he said to his Apostles, "I will come and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." This was fulfilled to them who died long before the end of the world. Let us hear the warning. We are all in danger of slumbering,

while our Lord delays his coming to call us away from this world. The bustle of this life, which keeps the body awake, may lull the soul to sleep; and the cares of the world may cause the lamp of profession to be found untrimmed, should we be called to die in what we term the middle of life, that is to say, at forty or fifty years of age. This, however, will be midnight to us, if we are then removed from this state of being.

But when life is protracted to old age, we are in great danger, from the dulness of the mortal frame, of finding that the immortal spirit and its religion, though vital and divine, and ever during, are in a state of languor and feebleness, quite undesirable, because utterly unfit for the moment of our departure. As this danger was designed to be cured, or prevented, by the admonition with which the parable closes, we should dwell upon it till the thought has taken fast hold of our souls, and for ever banished the notion, that, because we are in a safe state, all is right. Our state may be right, but our frame may be wrong.

The slumbering of the foolish virgins may be naturally expected; for as Job asks, "What has the hypocrite gained when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" Every decay of our religion should wake our jealousy and alarms, lest this should be an indication that we have taken up a mere temporary profession. But, if it be well established that we are wise to salvation, it is neither honourable nor comfortable for us to be foolish, even for the shortest time. Those who know that they may die at any moment, should feel that there is not a moment in which it is safe to slumber. For in such a frame who would like to die? That wise virgins slumber should be no encouragement to us to do so, as no wise man would take a license from the saying, that "wise men sometimes do foolish things." "Let us not sleep as do others."

2. They were all roused up by one common alarm. "At midnight there was a cry, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

To this, perhaps, the Apostle alludes, in 1 Thess. iv. 16; "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God." Though we may be lulled to sleep by midnight, and darkness, and idleness, Time slumbers not, but travels on in the greatness of his strength, with winged feet, night and day; Death slumbers not, but the pestilence walketh in darkness, or flies upon the wings of the poisoned wind; Judgment slumbers not; for, if it be said to have a leaden foot that moves slowly, it treads firmly, and marches surely; and when it has arrived, it will seem to have come quickly, as "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Any cry that rouses us out of our slumbers at midnight, will alarm and affright us more than that which finds us waking and watching. But if the shout of "fire!" will have this effect, how much more that of death! judgment! eternity! There is something so serious in these last things, that even a Christian, if waked out of a slumbering state, will find it demands all his utmost religion to meet the Judge with composure, and much more with delight. Such, however, should be our frame, that, whenever the Son of man cometh, either to call us away by death, or to judge the world, we should "lift up our heads with joy, because our redemption cometh." "Confidence, that we may not be ashamed before him at his coming," is, by the beloved Apostle, exhibited as the privilege of the church. What else is the meaning of this animated charge,—" Seeing all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Looking for, and hastening to the coming of the day of God, wherein, the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Our hearts should leap forth, with joyful salutations to our Lord, saying, "Welcome! welcome! to the longing soul!" Our whole lives should be spent in an anticipation of Christ's coming; and ten thousand times should we say, "Why do his chariot wheels so long delay?" Does this appear extravagant? What! shall our Lord be an unwelcome intruder, when he comes, even to his own people? Shall such a visitor have none to welcome

his appearance? And who should hail his coming, if we do not? If the world should say to the descending Judge, "Away! roll back thy chariot wheels; return to the skies; we want thee not!" would not you revolt at such treatment to such a visitor? Would you not say, "Forbid it, that he who came once to suffer for our sins, should not now be welcome, when he comes, the second time, without sin to salvation!" Then, we must go forth to give him a joyful meeting, whenever he comes. We should seek to be found in that waiting posture, that wakeful frame, that will suffer no alarms, create no reluctance, nor wish for one moment's delay of this consummation of all things. But, with all these resemblances which we have seen in the sincere Christian and the false professor, we have now to mark,

III. The final distinction in their doom.

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

All the virgins waked at the midnight cry; for great events will often produce a general effect, and make men of very different characters appear to act alike. A mere profession may be revived, and put into its best state, though that be found to be essentially bad. Here are grand discoveries made of essential differences, which give rise to two dialogues, between which is interposed one awful decisive event. Let us consider,

1. The dialogue between the foolish and wise virgins. "The foolish said to the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." They soon found that it was vain to trim a

lamp that would not burn because it had no oil. They discovered that all their attempts to revive their religion failed; for they had not the "hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given to us." The lamps of the wise had burned dull, and needed trimming, yet they had not gone out; Christians never lose their hope, nor their love for Christ's appearing. But the lamp of the wicked had gone out, as the wise man says it will. "Give us of your oil," they cry to the wise, "for our lamps are gone out." Nothing is more common than for mere pretenders to religion to discover the difference between themselves and the truly pious, and to fly to them for help. "O pray for me," they will cry; "for God will hear your prayers, and I fear that he does not regard mine." "Pray for me," the dying child will say to his pious parent, for the sake of whose piety he almost hopes he shall be saved. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me," said the rich man in hell; and the Jews say, "We have Abraham to our father," hoping for much on his account.

"Not so," said the wise; "for what does it avail to fly to men? They cannot give us grace, or mercy, or heaven. All fulness is treasured up in Christ, and out of his fulness we must receive grace for grace." In vain would you fly to the most exalted saint, in earth or in heaven. Then, say to the God of all grace, "Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man." Though it might melt a heart of stone to see the suppliant looks, to hear the piteous cries, and feel the death-like grasp of the dying sinner who clings to us for help, we cannot save him.

If some expect an interpretation, or application of the words, "Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves;" I would say it belongs to the imagery, rather than the moral of our parable; but it may be illustrated by the language of the Prophet, (Isa. lv. 1,) "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."

Our Redeemer, however, evidently intended to teach us

here, that in vain are we associated with the wise in fellow-ship and friendship, and even in office; if we are not wise, they cannot help us. "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; and if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. For every one shall bear his own burden." Each one must apply, for himself, to the first source, the fountain of religion. No creature has religion, for himself and others too, however some may dream of saints who have works of supererogation, which they have left to be dispensed, in the form of pardons and indulgences, to those who will pay for them. Alas, those who trust to this delusion will find that they are cheated of their money and their souls too. Fly, then, while there is time and hope, to the God of all grace, that you may "obtain mercy to pardon and grace to help you in time of need." For, see, there comes,

2. The decisive event. "While they were gone, the bride-groom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."

Shaken off from all their false hopes, and disappointed in their vain applications to creatures, they were not among the waiting company, when the bridegroom came. Only those who were ready went in with him to the marriage. To be ready! what felicity! what honour! what safety! We are almost afraid to think it can apply to us. To be ready to die! to be ready to enter heaven! Yet every one that is found in Christ is complete in him, and there is no condemnation to such; for "they have passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation." Christ "shall present them before the presence of his Father, without spot, or blemish, or any such thing." Our frame, however, may not always be such as to give us the evidence and the comfort of this state. "Blessed are those servants who live always watching for their Lord; that whether he come at midnight, or at noon, or at cock crowing, he may find them ready!"

When they were gone in, the door was shut. Oh, when the sound shall be heard of the door closing fast, to shut up all in their eternal state, what rapture shall they feel who find themselves within! What gratitude to find that the door has not shut them out, to that darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." "The light of the wicked shall be put out."

3. The dialogue between the foolish virgins and the bridegroom follows. "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." v. 11, 12.

They found their religion was vain, when death came to try it; and while they were seeking to repair their error, and going to buy oil, when they should have been receiving its light, seeking a Saviour whom they ought to have been enjoying, they found eternity close upon them, and themselves in a world of woe, cast out from heaven and all its joys. How dreadful to find the door of mercy and of hope shut upon us! O the thunder of that sound! Against it guard, by listening instantly to the voice that says, "Behold, now is the accepted time, to-day is the day o. salvation!" "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open to me, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me."

For how vain was it to cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Yet the natural desire of happiness will follow us into eternity, and we shall wish, though in vain, to be admitted into a heaven for which we are not fit. That cry for bliss which arises merely from a wish to escape torment, is no proof of real religion. In this world, the tears of true repentance never fall in vain, and heaven will hear the cry for mercy through Christ; yet many shall say, in that day, "Lord," to whom he will reply, "I never knew you."

In vain may the sinner knock so loud as if he would force heaven's gates. They are for ever barred against pollution, unbelief, and hypocrisy. In vain we come, after the proper time, having passed the appointed bounds. In vain the impenitent cry, as if they would melt the heart of God to reverse his own decrees; for the mercy of God is not mere sensibility, or passion, but a wise and holy determination to save the chief of sinners, who come to him through Christ, while he invites them; but if we pass that time in our sins, we shall find that he is as firm as he is kind.

How could we bear to hear the voice of the judge say, through the closed doors, "I know you not!" Will it avail to reply, What! not know us, Lord? Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, and prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils, and done many wonderful works?" He solemnly affirms, "I know you not." What! he that knows all things, knows me not? Knowledge he puts for approbation. "I approve you not, love you not. You are not of my sheep; as I said to you, I know my sheep, and am known of mine. But I will not know a wicked person, nor recognise as my friends those who were not in attendance upon me. What does it avail to come, after I have entered the marriage chamber, and the door is shut? Was not your attendance with the lamps designed to light me home, and grace my nuptial procession? What, then, do you here, ye who have been absent at the proper moment? must the doors be kept open for strangers all night? I know no friends of the bridegroom, invited to the wedding, but those who were in attendance, with their lights, at the moment I wanted their service, and all such have already come in with me; so that all who are now without, must stay out for ever."

Hear, then, the conclusion. "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Watch over your own profession. We, my brethren, are now approaching the Lord's table, to "show forth the Lord's death till he come." If any one had seen the company which Christ here exhibits, at the bride's door, and asked, Who are these? and what are they doing? would not the answer have been, There is the bridegroom, and these ten are his friends expecting his appearance, to light him home and enter with him to the marriage feast? At this table, the lamp of your profession blazes, and you proclaim

to the world that you are looking for Christ's coming. But he warns you, that, not all who do this, are wise. Some are not what they appear to be, and therefore "let a man examine himself." Obey the voice. Ask yourselves, Have I more than a mere lamp which every one can see? Have I a secret spring of religion, which God and conscience alone can discern? If you have, then, hear him that says, "that good thing that is committed to thee, keep by the Holy Ghost that dwelleth in us."

If, conscious that you have not the inward principle of grace, you ask, What shall I do? Shall I throw away my lamp, abandon my profession, and declare myself no Christian? I ask, in my turn, will that make you ready to meet the Lord, and enter with him into the marriage chamber? To have a lamp is not your fault, but to have no oil. This, then, is the evil to be remedied. Ask and you shall receive, for God giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him: receive from Christ that blessing he proffers. "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him shall receive." "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give, it shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life."

But even then, when the question is happily settled, and it is certain that we are wise virgins, who have oil in our vessels with our lamps, the midnight cry should often sound in our ears, "Ye virgins souls, awake and trim your lamps; for ye know not the hour when the bridegroom cometh." Who knows when Christ shall come, the second time, to judgment? And if we say, "there are many scriptures to be fulfilled first;" still, of death, Christ says, "I will come and receive you to myself;" and we may all say with Jacob, "I know not the day of my death." Then, should we not see that our slumbers be shaken off, and our lamps be trimmed, and be burning brightly? For what honour can our Lord receive from a lamp that emits smoke and stench, rather than light? And what comfort can we derive from it? If we see some whose lamps are manifestly gone out, and they have turned away from the door of the bridegroom, should not

this alarm us, especially if we see our own lamp dim and smoky? For we have been taught by our Lord, that if the foolish virgins may fall fast asleep, while their lamps go entirely out; the wise too may so slumber, that their lamps may want trimming. There are evils, into which a real Christian may fall, that awfully resemble those which overtake none but hypocrites. But how shall we know the difference? We cannot, except at the waking time. It is when the Christian is roused and becomes himself again, that we discern the wide difference between him who is only almost a Christian, and him who is altogether such. Is it not, then, infinitely important that we should "not sleep as do others, but watch and be sober?" For to indulge ourselves in a frame of mind in which we should not like to die, under the persuasion that we shall not die just yet, but before that solemn moment shall come we shall wake up and have time to trim our lamps, is to contradict all that our Lord has said of the necessity of being always prepared, in consequence of the utter uncertainty of the time of his coming. If we were poor, and a rich friend promised to come, at a certain week, to take us to live with him, saying at the same time, I cannot tell you what day of the week, or what hour of the day, I shall come; should we not deem it necessary to hold ourselves in readiness for him, every hour, of every day, in that week?

To be found walking closely with God, when the hour of death shall come, will be crowned with such delights as have attended the dying moments of some eminent saints, and have compelled even the wicked to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." To be admitted into the presence of the Lord, when some who made a similar profession are shut out, will fill the soul with what we may call awful delight. For the exclusion of even the more specious among men, must give a character of astonishing peculiarity to the grace that bids us welcome.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

MATT. XXV. 14-30.

Numerous and oppressive as are the difficulties of preaching, none are more obvious to the hearers, or more trying to the minister, than those which arise from the diversities in our audience. Called to address persons of various ages, ranks, and shades of character; in attempting to meet the ideas and tastes of one, we often become unsuitable to another. Anxious to benefit all, we sometimes adopt that tone of thinking, and make that selection of words, which will meet the average of minds, and neither rise above the uneducated, nor sink below the more cultivated. But then we are in danger of that greatest of all faults, a tame mediocrity, which is uninteresting and inefficient. We are, therefore, often induced to wish that we could classify our hearers, and preach to each description of persons in the style which is to them most appropriate. This, however, is impossible.

But, to-day, I could wish that my audience were even more diversified than any that ever met under one roof. I should be glad of a congregation of princes and beggars; of peasants vegetating on the clod, and philosophers soaring in quest of unknown worlds; of those who are usually called laymen, immersed in secular cares, and of ministers, consecrated to the service of the church. For my text addresses all classes, and teaches,

I. Our present relation to God.

This parable, which shows that we stand as stewards to a

Lord who has intrusted us with property, to improve for his interest, is so like to that recorded in Luke, concerning the pounds, that some have attempted to identify them. This, however, is a mistake.

Here we have two parties exhibited, and

1. On God's part we behold sovereign goodness—goodness in committing to us talents.

Some have calculated the amount of the talent, and from thence have argued the value of those capacities and possessions committed to our trust.* But, without dwelling on this subtile refinement, it is manifest that a rational mind is a talent of inestimable worth. By the rays of intellect, we can see, amidst the mass of matter, the infinite mind, and by its aid can hear the planets

" Ever singing, as they shine,

'The hand that made us is divine.'"

What shall we say of conscience? Parents, would you not think you had done much for your child, if, when you sent him into the world, you had engaged a faithful monitor to attend his steps, ever whispering in his ear, "This you should choose; and that, shun?" Our Creator has planted, within the centre of the soul, an oracle, whose responses we are compelled to hear, and whose monitions we cannot easily despise.

Shall I mention the affections of the heart—love and hatred, desire and dread? or name the human will? To be able to choose and refuse, so that no creature can deprive us of our elective power, is a precious talent. And what shall I say of memory, by which we treasure up the past, and reserve it for future use? Nor must the imagination be forgotten; for by it we seem to create new worlds, and dwell where we please—in heaven, amidst the wise, and holy, and blessed; or, if our imagination be polluted, it may revel amidst crimes which we have no power to commit. A faculty so creative, is a shadow of omnipotence. I say nothing of the senses of the body, though valuable as inlets to know-

^{*} A talent has been estimated at 1871.

ledge and enjoyment; but I will speak of that portion of his creatures, which I call my property. Some acres of the globe, or some of its dwellings, or a portion of the gold and silver that has been extracted from its bowels, we, by a misnomer, call our own; and no one needs argument to prove to him that this talent is worth something. But, stand aside, all other treasures; for behold the revelation from the infinite mind! "To us are committed the oracles of God," telling us how he made us, what he thinks of us, how he means to dispose of us, and above all, what he has done for us; "not sparing his own Son, but giving him up for us all."

In this sense, I grant that grace is included among our talents; but to suppose that grace, as an influence that imparts right dispositions, is intended, would be absurd. The very parable itself declares, that one of the servants had no such grace; nor is a master bound to give right dispositions. The talents are intrusted to us, as the test of our character. One of these I must not omit,—the station we occupy in society, our opportunities of usefulness, for this is the special object of Christ's intention here; the parable being given for the sake of the Apostles and ministers of Christ.

But God's sovereignty is seen, in giving to some more, to others less. "To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one." What partiality! some exclaim. Is not this "showing respect to persons?" But I hear my Maker say, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? may I not do what I will with my own?" Are not the talents of his creatures his own free gifts? May he not vary the capacities of those who could not claim even existence? Have I a right to demand the powers of an angel? Or can a worm claim my superior body, or my immortal mind? It is enough that we are not called upon for the improvement of talents that we never possessed; and this parable shows each one accepted according to what he had and improved. In this house of worship, sovereignty holds her throne; for here we meet to worship the true God, and hear of the only Saviour, and here we must say, he "hath not dealt so with every people, and as for his judgments they have not known

them." Behold a rising race, nursed in the bosom of religion and sacred learning; but ah, how many descend from parents who never conducted them to the house of prayer, to listen to the voice of Him who speaks as never man spake!

And to whom was this parable delivered? To the Apostles, who were sitting with their Lord on the mount of Olives. The ministers of religion, then, were the special objects for whose instruction it was intended. Here we see great variety. James and John were surnamed by their master, "sons of thunder," while John, we know, drew from the Saviour's breast, on which he leaned, the very spirit of love. Peter, in his happier moments, showed himself a rock. Paul was, in knowledge, not a whit behind the chiefest of the Apostles, having been caught up into the third heavens, and heard unspeakable words. "His letters were weighty and powerful, if his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible." Variety in harmony constitutes the beauty of all God's works. But variety will, in some respects, create inequality, which no doubt existed among the Apostles; for though their rank and authority were equal, in their usefulness there are various degrees; as some of them have left no writings, while those of others form a large part of the inspired oracles, which daily instruct and sanctify the church.

That other ministers differ in gifts and powers, who will deny? The bodily constitution of some fits them for greater service than others. A strong frame, a commanding person, a musical and powerful voice, a firm set of nerves, a piercing eye, enable this man to sway an immense audience, while that is limited by physical defects to a narrow sphere. This difference, however, is insignificant, when compared with the inequality of mental endowments. A capacious and retentive memory, a vigorous and creative imagination, a clear and solid understanding, a glowing heart, a dauntless courage, set some ministers far above others. Important distinctions, however, are created by Providence, which gives to this man opportunities and facilities for the efficient exercise of his powers, which are denied to others: and thus the

race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but there is a tide in human affairs, that is not under our control.

But when it is said, that this lord gave to every man according to his several ability, we are embarrassed to find what this means. Many erroneous interpretations have therefore been proposed. Unable to satisfy myself in any other way, I am disposed to think that this sentence belongs merely to the machinery of the parable, showing that a master would intrust property to servants, in such proportions as he thought they had ability to manage. If, however, we must apply this to the doctrine of the parable, I should paraphrase it thus: "Whatever abilities you see in every one of the servants of Christ, they are his gift; for to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of Christ."

2. On man's part, we see obligation to improve his talents to the divine glory.

Many augment their powers and possessions; but it is for themselves. What fearful examples could I adduce of men, who have cultivated their minds, so as to acquire an extent of knowledge and a command of literature which rendered them the idols of their country and their age. But this was all their aim. Of every talent they acquired, God was robbed. They sought to eclipse the effulgence of their Creator, by their own vain lustre. From such clandestine commerce with the master's property, for the servants' gain, we turn with abhorrence. For, whatever may be the profits of this trade, they serve only to brand the illicit dealer with the infamy of an enormous thief; and to sink him, as by the prophet's "talent of lead," into deeper perdition.

That improvement which this parable inculcates, is for the glory of the sovereign Lord. When this is our aim, we cultivate our understandings, to know more of the Infinite Being; that we may conceive for him a more lofty regard, and recommend him more effectually to the admiration of others. If we increase our substance, it is "to provide things honest in the sight of all men, that we may give to him that needeth,"

and lay, at the Redeemer's feet, the riches which are his due. We extend our sphere of action, that a wider space may be filled with the odour of the Saviour's name, the lustre of his glory, and the melody of his praise. If this be not our aim, we shall receive no thanks for our increase. But to maintain diligence of exertion with purity of motive, how difficult! We blush to hear the vain-glorious cry, " Come, see my zeal for the Lord;" to behold talents that belong to God paraded to deck out the creature; and that which should have attained the great end of existence, perverted to feed the most detestable passion, a servant's pride. Shocked at this, some, shrinking from vain glory, dwindle into unprofitable tameness; and, lest they should do wrong, do nothing. These, however, are but the guilty extremes; our path lies at equal distance from both; diligently to occupy our Lord's talents, but "do all for the glory of God."

I have thus glanced at the different degrees of improvement among the faithful servants; but of him that did nothing, I shall not speak, till we consider that which now awaits our attention.

II. Our future reckoning; v. 19.

"After a long time, the lord came and reckoned with his servants." As all Christians should look for the coming of the Saviour, so ministers, especially, must keep this in view, and "watch for souls, as they that must give an account." This reckoning often commences before the day of judgment, but will then be seen in terrible glory.

1. The unequal returns of men will then be detected.

These are before our eyes continually; for we see scarcely any two make equal improvements. Behold the most faithful, he that received the five talents.

Here we naturally think of such distinguished men as prophets and apostles, reformers and revivers of the church, endued, by the Providence that raised them up for eminent service, with what are called great natural abilities. These were, by the force of eminent religion, consecrated to God, with such ardour, and industry, and intense perseverance, that the able man became the eminent saint; the saint, a pro-

found divine; the divine, a powerful preacher of righteousness; the preacher, an apostle to many nations; and the apostle, an embodied seraph. By their mighty efforts, these men increased their talents. Some have much enlarged their sphere; for men of energy compel circumstances to yield to them, and where one would sit down and complain for want of an adequate field, another would create one for himself.

See this exemplified in such men as Luther, Calvin, Knox, Latimer, Whitefield, and Wesley. Luther and Calvin were among the first scholars of their day, and endued with genius and energy to move the world. But, whatever they were originally, their powers were, by diligent improvement, doubled. Many may have originally set off in the career of life on equal terms with them; but who came near them at the end of their race? Luther, from the cell of a monk, burst upon the world, which he filled, like the sun, with his beneficent influence. Calvin not only became a father to the Protestant church in France and Geneva, but by his correspondence and his influence, he built up the reformed churches in other parts of the world. Such a woman as Lady Huntingdon possessed, indeed, originally an important talent; but what was it when it came into her hand, compared with what she made it by passing through her hands?

Yet some, under the strange conceit that they are five talent men, are too proud to learn, and too lazy to work. But the possession of extraordinary abilities only lays us under the more solemn obligation to improvement. It is a maxim in the commercial world, that capital is the grand lever, and that money makes money. If, then, our Lord has intrusted to us five talents, we should make them five more. Thus Paul says, "His grace bestowed on me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all." And is it not so with all who, in consequence of distinguished talents, are elevated in society? Their works would often terrify and exhaust what we call a day labourer. Is it too much, then, to expect this of the servants of Christ, that, if the Lord has intrusted them with five talents, they should think they have five times as much to do as ordinary men, and are bound to

make proportionable advances by doing so much the more good?

Guard, then, against a temptation which we know, from its ruinous effects, to be very common. None are so wasteful as the poor. They secretly cherish the thought that they can never rise, and, therefore, instead of providing for sickness, or old age, they recklessly spend everything on present gratification. This was more excusable previously to the establishment of Savings Banks, which now afford the poorest an encouragement to economy and forethought. But my object is to show the operation of the same evil principle in religion. Many Christians, and, it is to be feared, not a few ministers, sit down with the conclusion, that they have but one talent; and, exclaiming, What can I do? think themselves justified in doing nothing. These will be found slothful servants; and, if you look closely into their habits, you will see them in bed, when men of five talents are in their study; you will find them idling with the ignorant, when the men of understanding are growing still wiser by conversing with the learned dead; you will hear men of one idea repeating it to nausea, when those who have enlarged stores glean from every source, lest they should impoverish the church with perpetual repetitions. Those who are ready to fall into the conclusion, that they have but one talent, and can never do much, live indolent lives; while others who have mighty minds and large attainments, pass their days in incessant toil.

Oh that we could rouse the faithless servants from their sloth! Is it quite certain that you have but one talent? Might not the diligent use of that one elicit a second, of which you are not aware? You know not what you can do. Many talents, that are now in useful operation, were once supposed not to exist. But if it could be proved, that you have only one, is that a reason for idleness? Should we not rather conclude, that you cannot afford to be idle? What you want in capital you must make up in labour. To say the least, you should work as hard as they who have five talents; and then, though you gain but one talent more, "it

will be accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not."

2. Fidelity will be then richly rewarded.

Observe how those who had received different allotments of talents, and made very different acquisitions, one having gained five additional talents, and the other but two, are both rewarded substantially alike; for, to each one it is said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." To be accepted and approved, as genuine servants, will form the essence of our joy in the great day of reckoning; and our Lord will as truly welcome the man who diligently improved two talents, as the one who doubled five. "If there be first a willing mind, it will be accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." The judge will not say, "This man has gained for me five talents, and thou hast gained but two." He has given, as he pleases; all our care should be to improve; and he will say, Well done, to the Christian peasant in a village, as well as to the missionary who has won a continent to Christ; or the prince who has ruled an empire, in the fear of God. Each will be invited to enter into the joy of the Lord; though the slothful will be cast into outer darkness. If the faithful stand in the porch to be judged, they will enter into the palace to be rewarded. Yet it is not said, enter into the palace, or the festive hall, which some courtiers do, who share not in the joy of the prince, but are devoured with envy of others, or fear of being cast out again by the caprice of the king. But the good and faithful servant is bidden to enter into the joy of his Lord. Christ is now in the joy that was set before him, for which he willingly "endured the cross and despised the shame." Who can conceive, I say not describe, the bliss of him who once was a man of sorrows, but now enjoys the fulfilment of the promise, "I will make him full of joy with my countenance, most blessed for ever?" Into this joy, all his faithful servants shall enter; " having suffered with him, they shall also be glorified together."

But as participation with Christ in his joy, will form the

essence of our bliss, if accepted of him; we must rejoice in that acceptance, in proportion as he rejoices over the fruits of his grace in us, and is pleased to see the reflected image of a faithful devoted Saviour, in his faithful devoted servants. In the world to come, there will doubtless be found modes of rewarding present services, of which we cannot now conceive. In the eternal state, faithful servants of Christ, who have multiplied their graces and their gifts, and "turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars," and rank with "principalities and powers in heavenly places."

But, hear, now, with holy fear,

3. Condemnation pronounced on the faithless.

The sentence is drawn up in words of the sinner's own inditing; for all that slothful servants say for themselves, will, at last, turn against them. Yet how severe will be that condemnation that comes out of a man's own mouth! It will be like an arrow which, shot against the throne of God, returns upon the archer's head, with more terrible impetus, in proportion as it was darted upwards with more mighty malice.

"Take from him the talent;" for my property shall not be always buried. Take from him his understanding, and, from plain ordinary sense, let him sink down into drivelling imbecility; take from him his memory, and as he did not store it with my truth, let him forget his own name; take from him his money, and as he gave none, let him have none; take from him his office, his station, and let him not have a pulpit to trifle and to doze in.

Give the talent which this man buried, to him who has so improved five, that he now has ten. "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just;" the sphere of the idle is left vacant, that it may be filled by the diligent; and the favourable providences, which were in vain afforded to one set of men, are turned to another who will improve them to the divine glory and the public good. Grant us, O God, to learn the truth of this sentence, before it be pronounced against ourselves!

"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness;" alluding to a sentence pronounced at night, in a hall of

judgment well lighted up; so that they who are cast out from it are driven into the darkness which reigns without. But what darkness which this earth has ever known, even in Egypt, when smitten with the plagues of heaven, can be compared with that midnight of souls, which they shall endure who are banished from the light of heaven's day, the smile of an approving God?

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Eternal tears! How bitter! Weeping to know that tears are unavailing! Many bury their talents, because they will live in pleasure rather than in toil. "Woe to them that thus laugh now; for they shall weep and lament." Had they, like Paul, served the Lord, with many tears, they would have been richly repaid, when God shall wipe away all tears from the faithful servants' eyes. But, to escape the sorrows of a moment, they have plunged into everlasting wailings.

The resemblance between this parable and that of the pounds, must have been noticed by all who have seriously considered them both. This has, of course, led the lecturer into a repetition, for which, however, I make no apology, because it arose from following closely in the hallowed footsteps of my Lord. He has taught us that the sentiments here conveyed are so important, that they can afford repetition, and to us are so needful that they remind us of the Apostle's words, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous; but for you it is safe." We need line upon line and precept upon precept, to teach us that "to every one that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath."

Such differences, however, must have been noticed in these two similar parables, as to justify, I will not say, our Lord, in delivering them both, but the commentator in considering them as different and not identical. Luke says, the Lord delivered one pound to each of ten servants; here Matthew presents but three servants, and one received five talents, another two, and another one. The remaining parts of the parable have greater resemblance, except that in the

passage we have just considered, there is no mention, as in Luke, of the citizens, who "hated the Lord, and said, We will not have him to reign over us." The parable of the pounds, therefore, was intended rather as a warning to the Jewish nation, who rejected the Messiah, saying, "Let us break his bonds, and cast away his cords from us; we have no king but Cæsar:" while this of the talents, being delivered privately to the Apostles, as they were sitting with their Lord on the Mount of Olives, was designed as a lesson to the professed servants of Christ, especially his ministers, and most especially the Apostles of the Lamb. I have, therefore, ventured to apply the warnings to the ministers of the word, and to say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Over this parable, we who minister in the church, should meditate night and day. Our fitness for service, and our means of usefulness, will be increased, doubled, by faithful labour. If, then, we have any regard for the interests of our Lord's kingdom, any love for the perishing souls of men, any zeal for the prosperity of the "flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost has made us overseers," we must "give ourselves to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, studying to show ourselves approved of God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, instant in season and out of season, with all long suffering and doctrine." The more we do, the more we shall find ourselves able to do. But if we find fault with our talents, our opportunities, and our sphere, and sit down idle, content to do nothing because we cannot do as much as others, he who has a right to give as he pleases, will out of our own mouth condemn us. We may be compelled, even in this life, to say, "What would I give for that one talent which I once buried, and my Lord has now justly taken away!" When bed-ridden, we may exclaim, O how gladly would I now preach Christ, even in the humblest sphere! If paralysis should seize us, it may leave us just intellect enough to wish we had used what we once had for God and for his church. Of the future reckoning with us, if unfaithful, I dare not

attempt to speak, except so far as to hint, that, to destroy our own souls, by indolence, is sufficiently cruel to ourselves; but who can calculate the aggravations that must arise from having been the occasion of perdition to others, for whom we should "watch as they that must give account?"

But the appellation of unprofitable servant, given by our Saviour to him who buried the talent, may naturally remind us of the charge, "When ye have done all, say, We are unprofitable servants." Yes; let no one pervert the parable, by supposing that we are here taught justification by works. It is still most true that ye are "saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." But "ye are God's work created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that ye should walk in them." Our acceptance with God, and our eternal salvation, we obtain by believing in Christ, the Lord our righteousness; for, "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, and reign in life by one Jesus Christ." But if we profess to have obtained this blessing, and to rank among Christ's accepted servants, as all Christians, and especially all ministers do, then we must show our faith by our works, which shall be richly rewarded; while "the slothful will be cast out among hypocrites and unbelievers."

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

MATT. XXV. 31-46.

To creatures such as we are, obviously placed here in a state of trial, which we know cannot last long, while we know not but, the next moment, it may be terminated by a citation to the tribunal where we shall hear the sentence that will fix us for eternity, in happiness or woe; what can be so important as the consideration of the last judgment? But who shall describe that dread day of doom? We are all equally travellers towards the bar, where we shall all stand on a level; and the preacher is made to feel, by the bare contemplation of his theme, that, from the pulpit, he must descend and take his place among his hearers, when "the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened." This day, then, let us all hear a sermon on the judgment, by the judge himself. Just about to depart from a visit which he made to this world, not to condemn, but to save it. he calls up, by anticipation, the scene which he intends to exhibit, when he shall come again to "judge the world in righteousness." This discourse demands the more intensely serious consideration from us, because, addressed to an assembly of professed worshippers and servants of Christ, it was designed to describe, not so much the judgment of the world at large, as that part of the process which will apply to what is called the church of God. Let us, then, turn away our thoughts from the doom of the heathen, " for what have we to do to judge them that are without? But do not

ye judge them that are within?" Let us look well to our own account; for we are within the sacred enclosure of those who have thus received, from the lips of the judge himself, an assurance of the manner in which we shall be tried. I will not suppose it necessary to say more, to induce you to bend an anxious attention to the two classes of ideas here exhibited—the general apparatus of the judgment, and the process of the trial.

I. The general apparatus of the judgment: v. 31—33.

As Matthew has almost exclusively recorded Christ's first grand sermon on the mount, he alone has preserved to us this last discourse on the judgment. It follows other sermons of marked and kindred character,—that on the destruction of Jerusalem, the parable of the ten virgins, and that of the talents. Some have called this a parable, because it alludes to a shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. Others have justly observed, that, instead of saying, "then shall the kingdom be likened," our Lord says, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, before him shall be gathered all nations." This is more like proper than figurative, or parabolic language. I conceive that Christ threw in the allusion to the shepherd, to teach us, that we are here instructed by earthly allusions, because we are not capable; in the present state, of receiving a strictly proper idea of such a scene as the last judgment. For who can muse deeply over this and other Scriptural descriptions of the day of doom, without being conscious of difficult inquiries concerning time, and place, and manner, to which no rational answer can be given? Bearing this in mind, that we have here the nearest approximation to the truth, which our present mode of existence will admit, we have to divide our attention between the judge on the throne, and the world at his bar.

1. Behold the judge coming and taking his throne.

The Son of man shall come in his glory. "The Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son, and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." He is, therefore, here expressly

termed the Son of man, as Paul also says, "God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained." This is a part of the reward of his humiliation and obedience unto death. "Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, that every tongue should confess him Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This decree is most effectually executed, by making Christ the "judge of quick and dead." By this arrangement, men will see their judge, to the great consolation and joy of the believer, and to the utmost confusion of his enemies. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." "Even so, amen," the church exclaims.

"He shall come in his glory," is often declared with all the pomp that language can command. "I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, before whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them." If some of these gorgeous descriptions of judgment are prophetic of moral changes, still we cannot doubt that the moral governor of the world will clothe this final event, the crisis of the universe, and the consummation of the works of God, with glory suited to its importance and its end. The chief splendour will be derived from the appearance of the judge, who, though in human form, will show the truth of the word, "God is judge himself." Once he appeared "in the form of a servant," veiling his godhead; but he "will in his own times show who is the blessed and only potentate." Of this he gave some intimations, when he was transfigured on the mount, and "his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was brilliant as the light." But, when he showed himself after his ascension, Saul of Tarsus, struck with a splendour above the brightness of the sun, could not see for the glory of that light; and John, in Patmos, saw "that Just One, whose countenance

was as the sun shineth in his full strength." These, however, were but preparatory intimations of what will be the splendour of that day, when he will put all his robes of glory on, and show the full force and truth of that inspired word, "with God is terrible majesty." "O Lord, my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him."

Our Redeemer here says, "All his holy angels shall be with him." "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all the ungodly." The only orders of intelligent creatures of which we know the existence, are angels and men; and it is natural that these should be made acquainted with each other, as it will afford instruction in the character and government of God, and will exercise that benevolence, which is, in every being, the essence of holiness. Jesus "was seen of angels," when "the great mystery of godliness" was revealed in "the living God, manifest in the flesh;" and can we suppose that the last judgment will clear up and vindicate the ways of God to men, and principalities and powers in the heavenly places not be there to " learn the manifold wisdom of God?" When our Lord says, "all his angels shall be with him," he manifestly intends to recall the words of Daniel, "Thousand thousands stand before him, ten thousand times ten thousand minister to him." How great their numbers are, we may conclude from Christ's question to Peter, in the garden, "Thinkest thou not that I could now pray to my Father, and he should send me more than twelve legions of angels?" "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, the Lord is among them as in Sinai in the holy place."

"Then shall he sit," says the judge, "on the throne of his glory." What can this mean? Some have said, that as God, when he executes visible, striking judgment, is spoken

of as taking the throne, ascending the tribunal, and sitting in judgment, this is all that is meant here. It appears to me, however, that this expression comes in, after the mention of Christ's glory and the host of angels, to augment the impression by alluding to the throne of state, on which kings, who were the ancient judges, sat to try causes. Solomon's throne of judgment, made of ivory and gold, was the principal ornament of his court, and the admiration of surrounding nations. Daniel's description of the throne with fiery wheels, was, probably, in our Saviour's mind at this time. But as we cannot think of any literal, material throne, we are naturally led to advert to the narrative of the evangelist, who describes Christ's ascension, on a cloud, and to the words of the angels, " he shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Christ expressly told his judges, that they should see him as a judge, "sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." If, then, we can fasten on any literal interpretation of these words, it must be that of a splendid fiery cloud, on which Christ shall appear enthroned. But I recur again to the idea of something symbolical, and almost approaching to the nature of parable, in the whole of this description of the last judgment. What the corresponding reality will be, the day shall declare. Turn now to see,

2. The world arraigned at his bar. "Before him shall be gathered all nations." I have already observed, that though God will judge the whole world in righteousness, and they who have sinned without law, will be judged without law; yet Christ, now sitting amidst his disciples, on Mount Olivet, gives them here a warning of the manner in which he will judge those who profess to believe on his name—what is termed the religious world. Christians so called, of all nations, are therefore here said to be gathered before him, as in the fiftieth psalm; "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my sons together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." The subsequent language of the

judge is all addressed to the professed worshippers of God in the Jewish church; as here, also, every word that Christ says, is adressed to those who are supposed to have known enough of him to profess obedience to him. Of these, there will be whole nations, forming "a multitude that no man can number." How are our vanity and self importance blasted and withered, when we think of standing in that countless crowd, before God the judge of all! Though we had been mounted on heaps of gold, and decked with gems, and trumpeted by fame, we shall shrink into nothing there, where grandees, emperors, heroes, philosophers, will mingle with peasants, beggars, slaves, all tried for their lives.

To the judge, indeed, all will be intimately known, each one as if there were but one; and to the arraigned, the weight of the mass will be concentrated in each one's own individual case, for my trial and sentence will be all the world to me. Such will be the discriminating conduct of the judge, that he will separate the different characters "as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats." This figure Peter recalls, when he bids the pastors "watch over their flocks, so that, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may receive a crown of life that fadeth not away." The judgment exhibited here, being that of Christ's professed flock, he employs this imagery rather than that which he had before adopted of the distinction between the tares and the wheat, or the good fishes and the bad, or the wise and foolish virgins, or the diligent and slothful servants. Christ had warned us, that as the good Shepherd, he knew his own sheep; and now he tells us, that he will at last separate them from the goats. For he has the omniscience that discerns hearts and "distinguishes things that differ," however they may be disguised and mingled; and he has the omnipotence that separates, with infinite ease, those who have obstinately clung to pretensions that were arrogant, and who were "an abomination that maketh desolate, standing where it ought not." "Ah, who shall live, when God doth this?" "Who shall abide his coming? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." To apprize us of the separation which he

will make of the real from the pretended Christian, after bearing long with the mixture, was one grand design of this awfully glorious oration. Take the friendly warning, that when it shall be fulfilled, it may be in your favour.

"Then shall he place the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left." Here is probably an allusion to what one of the Jewish writers says, that in the Beth din, or house of judgment, there were two scribes, one standing at the right hand, writing down the words that justified, the other on the left, recording those that condemned. The right hand is considered the place of honour; as Christ's exaltation to supreme glory is expressed by his sitting at the right hand of God. The assigning of different stations to the righteous and the wicked, even before the process of the judgment, shows, as indeed every part of this discourse, and all the conduct of God does, that the judgment is not to be considered as scrutatory but declarative, not to detect, but to display the differences among men. We cannot but consider it a favour to the sincere to be placed among those whose society they have loved, and with whom they consider it an honour to be classed. To the wicked, on the contrary, it will be felt to be an ill omen to stand among those who are like themselves, especially when they are to be judged for having falsely pretended to be Christ's sheep, and then find themselves placed among the goats. But what difference of locality there will be at the judgment day, we cannot now conjecture; though we may be sure that something there will be to justify these words of the judge.

Let us, then, improve them in due time, by reflecting, that in vain we place ourselves among the sheep, and in vain do men, short-sighted as ourselves, place us there, even though we keep our profession up to the judgment seat, if then the judge himself divide us from his own, and assign us our station at the left hand among the goats. The loftier our profession, the more specious our appearance, the more adroitly we have contrived to filch the honours of sanctity; the more terrible will be the detection, the confusion, the shame, the horror, when we find ourselves "put away with

all the wicked of the earth, like dross." Let us court every investigation here, welcome any unmasking, where our state, if evil, may be changed, and we may pass, from pretended sheep and real goats, to the rank of genuine penitents, unfeigned believers, who shall stand at Christ's right hand, "when he shall come to discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." We hasten to comment on

II. The process of the trial.*

"I mean not, however, to enter fully into the wide field of awful glories which here opens to our view. My design is to direct your minds, under this head of the discourse, to two considerations,

" 1. That the final test of our character will be our regard for Christ the Judge. For this we are assured by the Redeemer will, at the great day, be his language: 'Come, ye blessed, for I was hungry and ye fed me; go, ye cursed, for I was hungry and ye gave me no meat.' But, perhaps it now occurs to my hearers, that this never is the question to be tried in human courts. There the judge is the arbiter, but not the subject of the action; he is to decide upon the conduct of the parties, but not their conduct towards himself. If in any cause he should himself be a party, he would in that be reckoned an unfit judge; for it would be suspected that self interest might dictate the award, which ought to proceed only from impartial justice. Here, however, the judge of the world fully apprizes us that he will decide on our fate according to the conduct which we shall have held towards himself. 'Receive a kingdom, for ye have shown kindness to me. Go, accursed, for ve gave me no meat.'

"And need I defend this arrangement? For who dares object? To whom does it appear inequitable that Jesus Christ should be judge, and that he should vindicate his own rights, by making our behaviour to himself the test of

^{*} The pages marked with inverted commas, are taken from a sermon which the lecturer published on these words, entitled "Judgment pleading the cause of Mercy," preached for a charitable institution.

our character? We feel that he who sits on this tribunal is exalted above all suspicion of partial bias. In him justice is embodied, and holds the seat, not blindfolded, but with the searching eyes of fire, suspending the balance fairly, whatever may be the cause at issue.

"Nor, indeed, is this case so completely at variance with all human precedent as at first sight may appear. For in whose name sit our judges to try causes? Is it not in that of the king? And yet is it not their object to maintain the king's laws, to judge whether they have been violated or duly honoured? Then here also, in the person of his representative, the king sits to maintain his own rights. But in that awful judgment to which our attention is now directed, the judge is himself the sovereign. 'Then shall the King say to his friends, Come, ye blessed; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat.'

"Nor, when I maintain that our dispositions and conduct towards Jesus Christ will be decisive of our character, can I suppose for a moment that the sentiment will appear at all new to a student of the Christian code. Are we not accustomed, whenever we open this holy volume, to meet the Saviour as our Sovereign, to hear him speaking in the tone of authority, as our Legislator and our Judge, saying, 'Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am?' Is it not here inculcated as the essence of virtue, the soul of religion, to repose in him our confidence for eternity, to yield to him the supreme affections of our hearts, to pay unlimited obedience to all his decrees, and to consecrate to his honour whatever we possess, even to our very lives?

"Thus, if one in the ardour of her attachment pours upon him the most precious perfume, he accepts it as no more than his due; he pronounces it a good work; he vindicates her from every reflection, and declares, that as his Gospel should bear his fame through all the world, so should it bear the odour of her devotion to him: 'Verily, I say unto you, that wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

"And through all the Christian Scriptures are not men pronounced blessed or cursed, according to their disposition towards the Saviour and Judge? Heaven darts its warmest beams of favour on those who cherish him in their hearts, and the inspired organ of Deity pronounces on them his authoritative benediction—'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' But whoever loves him not is pronounced a wretch accursed, to whom nothing remains but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, when this Lord shall come. 'If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha; accursed till the Lord come' to execute the sentence.

"But why should I step beyond the text? For though it is of vital importance, infinitely interesting all who shall stand at this tribunal, to know on what point our acceptance or rejection will turn; yet must not the passage before us, uttered by the judge himself, as long as it shall stand on the sacred page, satisfy every sincere believer that our regard to Christ the Judge will, at the day of doom, stamp our character and fix our fate?

"And were such discussions now seasonable, it would be easy to prove, that to all who have the volume of revelation (and of such I am now speaking) this is the true test of character. It might be shown, that in our affection for the judge of the world we obey both tables of the law, combining the love of God and of man; that we yield to the authority of law and the force of motive; that here meets all that can prove our love of virtue, our gratitude for kindness, our concern for the welfare of our own being, and our solicitude for the general good.

"But I forbear; for my object is only to secure to the prominent sentiment of my text the attention which it this day demands. This, then, (suffer me again to repeat it) I learn from the words, that it should thrill through my soul, that

I am to be judged by Jesus Christ, and that the grand point on which he will try me, is the attachment I have shown to himself. By this, he will acquit or condemn me; pronounce me blessed, or accursed; throw open to me the gates of heaven, or hurl me to the abyss of hell. Surely, then, we should inquire by what evidences we may form a safe conclusion concerning our attachment to the judge of our souls.

"This leads us to observe, that we are taught in this ac-

count of the process of the judgment, that,

"2. The test of our regard for the Judge will be our conduct to his friends: 'inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of

these my brethren, ye have done it to me.'

"For Christ is, in his own person, beyond the reach of our kindness; but having identified himself with his brethren, he has placed them between us and him as the receivers of his revenue; and thus he will, by our conduct towards them, render manifest to the world our secret disposition to himself.

"He has identified himself with his friends. Various and exalted are the praises of Jesus Christ contained in this holy volume. But on no subject are the sacred writers so divinely eloquent as when celebrating his condescension in becoming one with us. He takes our name, and delights to call himself the Son of man; he puts his own name upon us, and has authorised his Apostle to speak thus, ' For as the body is one, and hath many members, so also is Christ;' though he is there speaking, not of the person of the Saviour, but of his body the church. He feels for us as a part of himself: 'he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.' When the members were wounded on earth, the Head felt it in heaven, and cried out, 'Saul, why persecutest thou me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.' He feels the hunger of his body, the nakedness of his limbs, and goes with them to the bed of sickness, or the dungeon of persecution; for he says, 'I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, I was sick and in prison.'

"As this union to the Saviour and Judge is the foundation of our dearest hopes, the source of our most sacred consolations, but yet, like many other important truths, lies remote from vulgar apprehension; every figure is employed to develope its nature, and to afford a sort of argument from

analogy in support of its truth.

"This union with the Saviour, which forms our sweetest consolation, is also our highest honour. I am not insensible to intellectual distinction, by which our Creator has exalted us, 'giving us understanding above the beasts of the field, and knowledge more than the fowls of heaven;' nor would I, with Esau, despise my birthright of immortality. But if ever I indulge myself in felicitations on the dignity of human nature, it is when I recollect that there is such an one as 'the man Christ Jesus;' that 'he has taken hold, not of the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham, and has become the first born among many brethren.' And as it is essential to the preacher's success to have the hearts of his audience with him, I indulge the delightful hope that, in these feelings, I am not entirely without the sympathy of my hearers. This, however, I know, that the hour is coming when it will appear to every one, that to be identified with Jesus Christ is the source of safety, the summit of honour, the essence of bliss.

"Christ has placed these his brethren before us to be the receivers of the revenue of kindness which we owe to him. Our tribute of high esteem, pious affection, and active benevolence towards Christ, is to be paid to him through the hands of his people. This consideration, the Judge informs us, will silence the replies of both parties at his bar, satisfying the righteous that he justly reckoned to them services which their humility disowned, and convincing the wicked that they were as justly condemned for neglects which they attempted to deny.

"Hear the cry of astonishment that issues from the left— 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' They would have been far from treating their Judge thus. Rather would they have pre-occupied his mind with the 'gift that blinds the eyes and perverts judgment.' But they were mortified to find that this was beyond their power or their wealth, that they were to be judged by a being whom they could neither oblige by favours, nor corrupt by flatteries, nor deceive by fraud. In an uncourtly book they had read the offensive truth, 'Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect? Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? Will he enter with thee into judgment? Look to the heavens and see, and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him; or, if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou to him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou to him, or, what receiveth he at thy hands? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.' But, alas, it never occurred to them, that by profiting, from right motives, a man like themselves, they might show kindness to the Judge by whom their everlasting doom should be determined. For how few can see that glorious being, concealed beneath the form of a poor but pious man, whose naked limbs, or emaciated, or imprisoned body call aloud for the benevolent relief of fellow Christians! But when the Judge reminds them, that they did not thus minister to these his brethren, they stand convicted of the fact, though confounded at the inference he draws; Inasmuch as ye did it not to these, ye did it not to me.

"On the right hand, the heirs of bliss show, that if ungodliness overlooks its crimes, religion dotes not upon its own merits. They are equally surprised to hear the Judge say, 'Come, ye blessed, for I was hungry and ye fed me, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink.' They know not their own works again, and ask, 'Lord, when saw we thee hungry and fed thee? Ah, had we ever seen thee in need, it would have been counted our highest honour and felicity to relieve thee; it would have stamped value on our property that it afforded us the opportunity; and even our existence would have been counted precious chiefly for thy sake. But it was not ours to see thee in the days of thy flesh, and we felt as if we could do nothing for thee: we sighed over our own inability to give vent to the gratitude that laboured within our breast.' But when he says, 'Ye did it to these my brethren,' they assent. For they now remember how they were wont to say, 'O Lord my God, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight.' They are conscious that the brethren of Christ were dear to them for his sake; that relation to him could elevate the meanest in their esteem, and make them say of strangers, 'Behold my mother and my brethren, for they that hear the word of God and keep it, the same is my mother, my sister, and my brother.'

"Nay, even the poorest among Christians now recalls the time when Jesus was thirsty and he gave him drink. The pious villager remembers the day when a wayfaring man called at her cottage door and begged a draught of water for Christ's sake. The reply she gave, now recurs to her, 'I will readily give it, but would still more gladly, did I suppose you knew the value of that name you urged.' When the traveller replied, 'I used it not lightly, but because it was an argument dear to my heart;' she fetched a cup of water, but as she gave it sighed, for the first time, over her poverty, and exclaimed, 'Would it were wine, for his sake to whom I trust you belong!' The event long forgotten now returns, and the remembrance is refreshing; for it is attended with that of the Judge's own words, 'Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.'

"Thus the Judge will render visible to the world our secret disposition toward himself. By the heart, we are known to God: by the life we are approved to men. Justified by faith, when first we fly in secret compunction to the mercy-seat of the Invisible, we afterwards show our faith by our works, and according to these we shall be judged, when the King shall make his glory visible, and before him gather all nations. For what is the design of the judgment? Not to

inform the Searcher of hearts, but to manifest his righteousness to the world, to 'justify the ways of God to men.' Is it not necessary, then, that the judgment should appeal, not to the secret principle in the heart, but to the fruits of that principle in the life? Our works must, in that day, prove our faith, and the affections of our souls towards the Judge be manifested to all, by the kindness of our actions to them who were one with him.

"Ah! who would not wish that such witnesses may then be in court, to speak in our behalf? The Judge once alarmed his unbelieving hearers with the prospect of Nineveh's inhabitants, and the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, starting up in the judgment to condemn them: but may it be ours to see the brethren of Christ rally round us, to hear them exclaim, 'We had great joy in thee, for the bowels of the saints were refreshed by thee, brother.' O for the widow and fatherless, in that day, to be witnesses, that ours was the 'pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, which visiteth the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keepeth itself unspotted from the world."

"The persons and works of such will be publicly accepted by the Judge. Conceive of that vast assemblage of the human race, to which the crowds of this metropolis are mere solitude. It occupies all within the reach of the extended vision of a glorified body; so that it appears to each one, as if universal space were animated with spectators, whose gaze might overwhelm the mightiest mind, were it not that the flaming eyes of the Judge attract and absorb the attention of all. Behold them waiting in awful expectation of the sentence from his decisive lips, feeling that though lost as an atom in this world of animated beings, each one is distinctly marked by the Judge, who sees through every heart. As the humble Christian hears his own name announced, how his throbbing heart bounds with gladness to find it said to him by the sovereign Judge, 'Come thou blessed one, who hast fed me when I was hungry, and clothed me when naked, and visited me when sick, receive the kingdom prepared for thee!'

"If the felicity of ages can be crowded into one moment, that will be the moment, when those approving words shall vibrate on the Christian's ear, send the thrill of ecstasy through all his soul, and open to his expanded mind prospects of eternal bliss. Then terminate, for ever, all anxieties concerning the sincerity of his religion, or the final salvation of his soul. While in this life, seeing the balance tremble with our fates, we often writhe, as though its vacillation would be influenced by our movements. For if of the worst we say, 'while there is life there is hope;' the best have sometimes felt the chill and gloom of fear, like a cloud, crossing the mind. But this sentence shall affix the seal to the bliss of eternity. To hear the Judge say Come, will be heaven. To dwell with him who has made them one with himself, is here all their desire, and there will be all their joy. To behold the Lamb on the throne, to see the seat of supreme dominion filled by him who is their head, their firstborn brother, will be heaven to those who feel as members of him whose affection created the identity that has secured their everlasting bliss.

"Admission to share in the portion of those who love him will be the recompense bestowed by the Judge on those who have shown kindness to them. For thus the Apostle James describes their bliss: 'heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him.' This had often been their cry to heaven, 'O look thou upon us and be merciful to us, as thou usest to do to them that love thy name.' We ash, for we can conceive of no higher heaven than that God would look on, us as on them that love him. 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest to thy people; O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation; that I may glory with thine inheritance.' To call men to this felicity, Jesus sent forth Paul, that chosen vessel. ' Delivering thee from the gentiles, to whom I now send thee, (saith the Saviour) to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among all them that are sanctified, by

faith in me.' To this glorious object of his mission Paul looked, when taking his solemn leave of the church: 'Now, brethren, I commend you to God and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.' To find themselves among those who are thus sanctified, to take their place amidst the brethren of Christ, and, by sharing, to contribute to their bliss, will be a heaven to the saints. To them, while on earth, it was an exquisite delight to contribute to the relief of the afflicted members of Christ; for it was like feeding and clothing Christ himself. What, then, must it be in heaven to participate in the pleasures of those whose pains we once delighted to assuage?"

To hear the judge say, Come, will be most delightful to those who ever loved to be near him, and often cried, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" but to hear themselves called "blessed" by his lips will be transport to those who, cursed of men for his sake said, "Let them curse, but bless thou." Nor is it without use that it is added, "blessed of my Father;" for Christ spake to their hearts, when he observed, "I say not I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you." The Father who gave us Christ has made his blessing most dear to our hearts. Called to inherit a kingdom, they are reminded that it is not by merit of works, but by the grace of a heavenly birth, and a free adoption, that they are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." They sacrificed little, they gave little, but they received a kingdom, and are "made kings and priests to God and the Father for ever." That kingdom was prepared for them, not only when Christ said, "I go to prepare a place for you;" but from the foundation of the world, the eternal councils of God having designed this inheritance for us, and the world being created by Christ and for him, that he might be glorified in the bliss to which he would bring those who are redeemed from the earth by his blood.

To some, however, the tremendous words of the Apostle may be applied, "thou hast no part nor lot in this matter;

for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and the bonds of iniquity." But, however we may fail to awaken your sympathy for the friends of Christ, because the Saviour himself is an uninteresting object to your view; remember that your own most important interests must be decided at this great day of doom, which rapidly approaches. For how will you bear the fulfilment of these words?-"Then shall he say to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "Depart from me," may have nothing alarming in it to you now; but then to be told to depart from Christ and heaven, will exceed ten thousand hells. To depart, accursed, will aggravate the woe; for then you will see and feel what it is to be an accursed creature for ever. But, to go, execrated, into fire, which expresses all torments in one, will still further increase the woe, and especially as the fire is called everlasting, which will never be quenched. Eternity would make any misery intolerable. How much more that which is in itself so! The bliss of saints is said to be prepared for them; but this fire was "prepared for the devil and his angels." To share their doom, then, is to endure their society, as having made ourselves partners in their guilt, and thus rendered what was properly their fire, our own. Many who cherish the false hope of seeing an end to their misery, do not venture to say, they expect the devil and his angels will quit hell and enter heaven; and Christ here teaches us that our doom, if we are lost, will not only be as severe, but as lasting, as that of lost spirits, with Satan their leader and head.

I have so largely commented on the former words, as to leave myself little space for the solemn close of this discourse. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The obvious doctrine of our Lord is the eternity of future rewards and punishments. If any suppose that a distinction is made, because the punishments are said to be everlasting, and the rewards eternal, I would assure them the original word is the same in both cases; nor did our translators mean to convey any idea of

distinction, though it would have been better to render the same Greek by the same English word. It should be remembered that this eternity is assigned to the states of men, after the last judgment, when no farther changes will take place. If, then, we attempt to render doubtful the eternity of future punishments, we must, at the same time, shake our certainty of endless bliss.

I am not unaware of many things said against everlasting misery; but I know, also, that they are inconclusive. If any say that it is too shocking to be believed, I ask, Was it not then too shocking to be threatened? If you say, a benevolent Deity cannot do any thing so cruel; I ask, How then could he say he would do it? Does he govern the world by a lie; and that lie at once dishonourable to his own character, and so flimsy that these objectors have seen through it? It never could be right for him to threaten what it would be wrong for him to perform.

When it is said, that our momentary course of sin cannot deserve an eternity of suffering; I ask, Who made our course of sin momentary? Did we voluntarily stop short in our evil career, and turn to righteousness? Had we done so, we should have had no punishment; but, we should have gone on for ever in our sins, had not justice cut us short in our wicked course. Nay, we shall go on with our rebellion, even in eternity; and will it not be just to continue the punishment as long as we persist in the crime? Of this we may be sure, that a just God will never, for a moment, inflict on us more than we deserve; and the continuance of a just punishment, even to eternity, cannot be unjust.

Of the eternity of happiness I make no defence; for here none will object. Let me, then, entreat you to close your reflections on this awful theme, by abandoning for ever all reliance on that negative innocence which the wicked professor will at last plead, and plead in vain. We must have positive proof of superior regard for Christ, which must show itself, by kindling in our hearts an unfeigned attachment to those whom he considers as one with himself.

LECTURE XL.

CONSOLATIONS UNDER CHRIST'S DEPARTURE.

JOHN xiv.

When the mask had been plucked from Judas, and he, unable to lift up his face before Christ and the sincere disciples, had rushed out to do his traitorous deed, the affections of the Saviour gushed forth, as a stream that had broken down its mound. "Now," he exclaims, " is the Son of man glorified. God shall immediately reward my sacrifice with glory and bliss, into which ye cannot follow me now; but while ye linger here, seek to enjoy the heaven of Chrstian love, and let your affection for each other be such that all men may know I have disciples on this earth which has cast me out."

Such was our Lord's exordium to his last discourse at the holy table, which John alone has recorded, and which the ancients called "the song of the dying swan." Though it belongs not strictly to the public preaching of the Redeemer, it is so important to the instruction and consolation of the church, that it will be the theme of the three following Lectures. In the present, we shall consider that part of the discourse which affords consolation in the prospect of Christ's departure. The commencement applies more especially to the Apostles, and the close to Christians in general.

I. The consolations that belong more especially to the Apostles.

The first twenty verses were addressed, in the second person, to those who were then present; and here the departure

of our Lord is first announced, and then met with adequate consolations.

1. The departure of the Redeemer: v. 1—11.

Seeing in their countenances their horror at the traitor's deed, and their alarm at the removal of their Lord, he, like a parent who loves to see his children calm and happy, said, "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God and believe in me." For thus I would, with the Syriac, translate the whole passage in the imperative. The distinction that seems to be made here between God and Christ, has been seized as an argument against the divinity of the latter; but, on the supposition of Christ being a mere creature, he would say believe in God and believe in a worm; for such is a creature compared with God. He seems to say, believe in the God of all power, and in me as that God, manifest in the flesh, to make the approaching events work together for your good.

To give the most pleasant air to his departure, he calls it going to his Father's house; and as he had called the temple by that name, he, perhaps, alludes to heaven as "the temple not made with hands." In the sacred enclosure at Jerusalem, there were many chambers, temporary lodgings for the priests; but, in that above, there are many permanent abodes, for such is the signification of the word here employed. Though our Lord was going to the royal apartment, there are others in that palace, more numerous than the houses of the living, or the tombs of the dead. This was not said to soothe with fallacious hopes, since Jesus had shown such frankness that they might be well assured, if the contrary had been the fact, he would have told them. But various as are the apartments in that paternal home, all will be with the king; for, as Jesus goes to prepare a place suitable for us there, so will he come and receive us to himself. What a view this gives of death! It is not the king of terrors rushing out to kill us, but our dearest friend coming forth to meet and take us to his Father's house. Loving our society, and not content with heaven till we arrive there, he stoops, or even comes down from the skies, to fetch us up to himself. If he longs to have us with him, well may we ask to be for ever with the Lord. Joshua and the ark are gone over into the promised land, let us follow.

"For whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," says our Redeemer. But Thomas, who once said to the disciples, "Let us go, that we may die with him," now draws them all into a confession of ignorance, though without asking their consent. "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" While Jesus spoke of heaven, they thought that he might intend to go to some other part of the earth to set up his kingdom, so that they, deprived of his guidance, would not know the way to follow him. This he corrects, by saying, "I am that way." To call a person "a way" is unusual, even in the bold language of Scripture; but Christ is so entirely the medium of our access to God, that, if we know him, we know the path to glory, and our spirits may boldly venture into unseen worlds. Thus, also, we know "the truth," all that forms the substance of ancient types; and "the life," the soul of that heaven to which our wishes aspire; for eternal life consists in being where Jesus is. Let us, then, dwell on this treasure of wisdom and knowledge-Christ, the way, by his example; the truth, by his instructions; and the life, by his grace now, his glory hereafter. As a prophet, he guides us in the way; as a priest, he gives us, not the type, but the truth of admission; and, as a king, he bestows upon us life eternal.

Having confirmed his declaration, that he is the way, by saying, "No man cometh to the Father but by me," he carried the charge of ignorance farther than Thomas himself had intended. "If ye had known me, ye had known my Father also." But now, perhaps, pouring new light into their minds, he said, "From henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." How? They began to discern that the Father was in the Son, in such a manner as they had not before understood. But, perhaps, all were not partakers of that new illumination, and Philip exclaimed, "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us." Had they who were taught by Moses that there was nothing seen, when Deity spoke to

them on Sinai, and by Christ, that, "God is a spirit," a notion of God so gross as to suppose that they could literally see him? Perhaps they thought of such appearances as were afforded to Abraham, and asked for something of this kind to be indulged to them. They received, however, only this singular reproof. "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? He who has seen me, has seen the Father." Christ is the image of the invisible God; the clearest, best display of Deity that it is possible to enjoy.

To confirm this, our Lord assures them that his words should be received, not as the language of a mere man, though uttered with human lips, but that the Father should be considered as speaking to them by those lips; and that he, dwelling in the Son, performed the works they witnessed. Christ renewed his charge to believe him, when repeating that most mysterious assertion, that "I am in the Father, and the Father in me." Now, as if he would touch them to the quick, he says, "If ye believe not me." This must have been a most cutting supposition to those who ever professed to believe him, and really did so, in spite of all their imperfection and unbelief; "But if you believe not me, on the credit of my own veracity, believe me for the very works' sake." For who could believe in a God, and not be sure that he would not set his seal to a lie? Where such works were seen as those which Christ performed, it was most manifest that Deity was working by the hands of the Thaumaturgist, and, therefore, speaking by his lips. How admirably our Lord combines fidelity with grace! He justly reproved them for their dulness to learn, and their slowness to believe all his glory; but he stoops to appeal to his works, if they hesitated to believe his bare word.

2. The compensation which Christ would give for his departure.

There are four things that may be supposed to have troubled the hearts of the Apostles, at the present moment, and for each of them a counterpoise is introduced. First, for the loss of his own miraculous works, Christ promises they should have power to do greater: v. 12.

Here is an evident allusion to the double portion of the spirit of Elijah, which, after his departure, rested on Elisha. In many respects, there was a superiority in the works of the Apostles. In the nature of their miracles, such as imparting the Holy Ghost, with his miraculous gift of tongues, and other powers, to great numbers, by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. In their number; for how numerous must have been the miracles performed by the twelve men during a long life, such as that of John, and in the various scenes through which they passed! In their sphere: Judea was Christ's sole field; but the whole world was the sphere of the miraculous works of the Apostles. In their effects; the conversion of the nations and the founding of the Christian church in the world. It was never said of Jesus, as of Peter, that his shadow was expected to heal the sick, nor as of Paul, that handkerchiefs from his body restored health.

The disciple, however, is not greater than his Lord. For all this was the effect of believing on him, was the fruit of his merit, and was granted because he went to the Father, to make intercession for us. Now what reason had our Lord to call for their belief in him, as the antidote to that trouble of heart which began to seize them! For, by faith in these words, they would see the church, not perishing, because Christ was crucified as an impostor, but spreading its triumphs through the world, when, instead of one in Judea, there would be a host in all nations, preaching and confirming the word with signs following. And how wise, how holy was the arrangement, that Christ in his glory should do more than in his humiliation! and that when he had paid our debt, he should confer on us greater blessings than while he was yet chargeable with the mighty sum!

Our Redeemer gave a second counterpoise to the sorrows of his departure. For the converse of Christ in the flesh, they should have access and prevalence with him in prayer: v. 13, 14.

Prayer, though an essential part of the worship of God, is peculiar to believers. To ask in Christ's name, includes a regard to his word, that gives directions for prayer, and deference to his will, which is always wise, and holy, and spiritual, and precludes all carnal, foolish, pernicious desires. The Jewish writers inquire why the prayers of Israel are not now heard? And this answer they give, "Because they do not know the Shem Hamphorash, or the true sound of the word Jehovah." Alas! they do not know the name of Jesus, and its efficacy. Thanks be to God for making known to us that most efficacious name! For Jesus promises, "I will do whatever you ask." He makes intercession, as a priest on a throne, like Melchisedec, king as well as priest, the object of prayer, as truly as the medium of access. Christ, therefore, we must view as doing all those great and gra-cious things which are granted in answer to the prayers of the church; and when we are offering them up, we should hear him say, "I will do it, I will do it."

Let not any fear that this will turn our hearts from the Father, and rob him of his glory. Our Lord assures us that things are so ordered, "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." For here it is we see the Father; and all we know of the glory of the Son unfolds the honour of the Father's name. Here we find that the Saviour whom the Father sent, is, as he promised, "a Great One." The appointed medium which he provided for our access is so effectual that we never can come in this way in vain. Even an earthly father esteems himself honoured in the respect paid to the son, and the triumphant success which attends him in all his affairs; how much more, then, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who "loveth the Son and has given all things into his hands, that all men may honour the Son even as they honour the Father."

So important was this assurance of infallible success to prayer in Christ's name, that our Lord repeats it, on which Augustine well remarks, that the firmness and certainty of a declaration is in many passages of Scripture taught by the repetition. Calvin, also, justly observes, that "this is no

vain repetition. All see and feel that they are unworthy to approach to God. But many rashly dare to pretend to call upon him; and when their unworthiness comes to their recollection, they invent and multiply mediums of their own. But God invites us to himself, through a mediator, by whom alone he is accessible. But here, again, the depravity of the human mind shows itself, that they slightly catch this assurance, that the power and goodness of God interpose in our behalf only through Christ. But if one assurance of this does not sufficiently affect us, let us at least learn it, when Christ repeats it a second time, that we must ask the Father in his name, as though he laid a strong hand on us, lest we lose all our labour in prayer by asking favours in any other way." But what consolation our Lord here gives to those whose hearts were troubled! How justly does he call for our faith in the Father and in the Son! The disciples were about to lose the bodily presence of their master, and could no longer come to him, as before, and tell him their sorrows and their wants, but he assured them he would be as profitably accessible as ever he had been. In the additional assurance, that, "whatever they asked, he would do it," he employs the pronoun I in the most emphatic manner. It would be best translated by saying, It is I that will do it. Remember this, and give him the glory of the answer to your prayers.

Thirdly. For the influences they derived from the bodily presence of their Lord, they should have the operations of the Holy Spirit: v. 15—17.

That the disciples felt a peculiar and a happy effect from the presence of Christ with them in the flesh, we cannot doubt. Do we not secretly sigh and say, "Oh! that he were thus with us now!" Here, then, he promises them something which we shall shortly see is better than that. He introduces the promise in a way that is rather felt than understood. The keeping of Christ's commands, as a test of our love to him, I reserve for another place; and here merely suggest, that obedience should, in this connexion, be restricted to that command, to pray in his name, which is the present subject of consideration. If ye love me, obey me, by making

daily use of my name in prayer; and then I will echo these prayers that come up in my name, and pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter. The word paraclete, which Christ here employs,* is so peculiar that most translators adopt it, though not found in their language. Our version has shown the difficulty by the employment of two different words—comforter, here; and in 1 John ii. 1, where the same Greek word occurs again, advocate. The original signifies, one who speaks up for another, which may be done by speaking to him, to console him, or speaking for him, to plead his cause with a third party. Now Christ had acted as paraclete in both these senses, while he was with his disciples on earth; and here he assures them he would send them another, who would never be taken from them, as he was, but abide with them for ever.

Monitor, or patron, might also be employed to translate this difficult word, by which the Saviour expresses another self. Whatever was derived from Christ, when on earth, we enjoy in the Holy Spirit, now Christ is gone. They who turn away from his Spirit, to dote on the coming of Christ, dishonour both Christ and his Spirit. But the world cannot receive him, as our Lord foretold. How awfully do we see this fulfilled!

The disciples, indeed, had not all that knowledge of the Spirit which they should have possessed; but they had been persuaded that flesh and blood had not made Christ known to them, but the Spirit that glorifies Christ.

Here, then, is their consolation against the trouble of heart which Christ's absence would create, another should come and fill his place; and though the world would not receive him any more than it had welcomed Christ, the church would receive the one as it had the other, and would not lose this paraclete, as they lost the presence of Christ on earth. The Holy Spirit is within our breasts, a friend that never departs.

^{*} I suppose our Lord to have employed this word, which the Syriac version adopts, and which was introduced by the Greeks into the language of Palestine, during the reign of the Greco-Macedonian dynasty.

Fourthly. Against the loss of their patron, Christ opposed this promise, that they should not be left as orphans, for he would come to them.

The word which we translate comfortless, should be rendered orphans, which signifies, literally, children deprived of their parents, but in a secondary sense, any helpless dependant persons, deprived of a patron, and guardian, and friend, on whom they leaned. Among the Romans, the great men were considered patrons, on whom a number of inferiors, were considered patrons, on whom a number of inferiors, called clients, hung, for protection and favour. Now, Christ, our patron, about to leave his disciples, says, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you," or more literally, "I am coming to you." No dying father could say to his children, "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you;" but Christ was the "Eternal Father," who could utter this promise, "I will come to you." His chief design was to hold out to them the coming of the Spirit, at Penterest. Christ then proved that his church was not left an cost. Christ then proved that his church was not left an orphan. "The heavens must receive him, till the times of the restitution of all things;" yet he says, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world;" and wherever two or three are met in his name, there is he in the midst of them. Every ray of light with which his Spirit illuminates our minds, every glow of love which warms our hearts, every holy desire that we send up in prayer, every bright anticipa-tion of heaven that makes us aspire to the skies, every deed of noble daring that we perform for his glory, shows that Jesus is with us of a truth. The world, he says, will soon "see me no more," but you see me, and finding me alive, to fulfil my word, you will, yourselves, live also. "In that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye are in me, and I am in you." What knowledge! What bliss! What advancement beyond that state, when they asked, again and again what those things could mean!

II. The consolations that extend to all believers.

These which are spoken in the third person, as the former were in the second, give assurance of Christ's manifestations and our internal peace.

1. Christ's manifestations; v. 21-26.

He that has my commandments, by a knowledge of my will, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; for Christ sets no value on blind passion, or heartless speculation, but values the affection that is the offspring of knowledge and the parent of obedience. He that thus loves and obeys Christ shall be loved of the Father. In addition to that antecedent love which is the spring of all our love, there is a consequent love, which is made the motive and reward of affection and obedience to Christ, who adds, "and I will love him." Both the Father and the Son, who regarded us with benevolence when we were in our sins, view us with complacence and delight, when the love of Christ constrains us to keep his commands.

But as Christ's is never barren love, he says, of such a man, "I will manifest myself to him." In obedience to his commands the Apostles went out into the world, and from love to him, braved death. They wrote of him like men that knew him; and we seem, while reading their writings, to be conversing with those who had been caught up into the third heavens, to " see that Just One and hear the words of his lips." But to us, also, he sometimes acts as he did to the disciples going to Emmaus. We talk of him, and he seems to hide himself, but he suddenly withdraws the veil, as if, like Joseph, he could refrain no longer from manifesting himself, and saying, "I am Jesus." Delighted, we exclaim, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked to us by the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?" "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." This promise drew forth a question from Jude, which is the same as Judah or Judas; though this was not Iscariot, as we are carefully told. "Lord, how has it happened" that thou art about to manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?" It is not very easy to know all that

^{*} There is something equivocal in our version, which has led some to suppose that Jude inquired by what mode Christ would do it, but that is not his meaning.

was in the mind of this disciple, though we may fear that his meaning was not as good as some have supposed. Was this a burst of devout admiration at the special love of Christ? or was Jude still infected with the Jewish notion of a conquering Messiah? Was he not alarmed to find that the manifestation promised was to be given only to disciples, and that the world would not be permitted to see it, which damped the worldly hopes of this better Judas? The more literal translation leads to this view, which is confirmed by Christ's answer. He replies to both parts of the question.

As to a manifestation to disciples only; "if a man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and I will come to him, and we will make our abode with him." To those only who had received the Gospel and obeyed it, the Father would give this proof of love, that Christ should come to them after his resurrection from the dead. Every manifestation of the Lord from this time was indulged to disciples only. If you wish to know why such favours are granted to some which are denied to others, here is the answer-love. They love me, and long to see me; to them it would be a favour transcending all others, and this I grant to those only who know how to appreciate it. But as they love me, and long to see me, so these are the persons whom I love, and long to show myself to them. The Father loves them too, and thus we will come and make our abode with them. The manifestation that is in future to be expected is such as applies to the Father as well as the Son, and therefore is not visible to the eye of the world, but spiritual and internal, known only to those who "walk by faith, not by sight."

As to the refusal of this manifestation to the world; "He that loves me not, keeps not my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. Why should I manifest myself to those who care not to see me, and show their indifference to my person by their neglect of my commands? As the Father has by my lips promised a manifestation of himself, how can this be afforded to a world that is at enmity with him?"

If there was some obscurity in this professed explanation, Jesus reminds them, that he had spoken in a way that accorded with their state, while he was with them. But now he renews the promise of the paraclete, and these two are the only passages in which the word is applied to the Holy Spirit. The manner of our Lord is most anxiously pleonastic; "the paraclete"—"the Holy Spirit"—"whom the Father will send"—"in my name"—"he shall teach you." The grammar of the passage is violated, to show that the Spirit is a person, not a thing, a mere influence. Spirit is in Greek neuter, but the personal pronoun is masculine, in Greek neuter, but the personal pronoun is masculine, in Greek neuter, but the personal pronoun is masculine, indeed, there was no occasion for a pronoun at all, except to show the personality of the Spirit. Here, again, the whole Trinity appears. The Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son. The promise to teach all things must be restricted to the subject in hand. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said." This evangelist affirms in his epistle to the church, "ye have no need that any one teach you; for that anointing which you have teaches you all things." The coming of the Holy Spirit not only brought the words of Christ to the Apostles' minds, but with all their meaning, and truth, and force. While, therefore, he spake these things which they did not understand, the Spirit was coming to bring them again to remembrance, and pour all their light and truth upon the heart. This gospel of John is a proof of the fulfilment of the promise, for it was written last, as some think in the hundredth year of the Christian era; and yet it think in the hundredth year of the Christian era; and yet it contains the largest account of the discourses of Christ, where the nicest differences occur, which demanded the most exact recollection, to avoid misrepresenting the Saviour's mind. What consolation this promise must have afforded to the Apostles! They felt that they were yet enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, and they expected soon to lose their accustomed teacher, to whom they had always gone for explanations; but now they saw, that so far from being placed in worse circumstances, they should enjoy a teacher that would vanquish their ignorance, and not only bring

back the words of their Lord, after he was gone, but also with higher advantages; for the obscurity which seemed to hang over his language would then vanish.

How sad is the reflection, that many, professing to honour Christ, and receive his words, attempt to explain away this most precious promise of the paraclete! While Christ seems to labour to show that Spirit to be a person and a glorious one, they toil in the opposite direction, to render him a mere thing, or rather a mere nothing. They cannot agree among themselves what this Spirit is; but now make it this, and now that, and in the end make it nothing at all. But let us honour the object of Christ's last kind promise, the person who bears the same name of paraclete, or monitor, which our Saviour himself assumes. Let us, emboldened by this promise, ask, in Christ's name, for that Spirit which we so much need, both to remind us of Christ's words, and to lead us into all their truth.

2. Our internal peace was the next consolatory promise of our departing Lord; v. 27.

This he delivered as a dying person in the form of a legacy. How many of the rich and great, though leaving their children heirs to power and wealth, could not say, "Peace I leave you!" But he that was going away to a frightful death, leaving his disciples exposed to the enmity of the world, could say, "my peace I give you." The New Testament would afford greater peace than the Old, and Christ was now about to make peace by the blood of the cross. Perhaps our Redeemer calls it his peace, because it was to be a participation of that internal calm which he himself would enjoy, when, having entered into his rest, he should sit down at the right hand of God. After his resurrection, he said, "Peace be to you." He was promised under the name of "Prince of peace," of which the Targum says, "it must be interpreted of the Messiah, in whose days peace should be multiplied towards us." The world gives mere external peace, such as follows the termination of war; but Christ gives internal peace, by calming the angry and tumultuous passions of the soul. The world gives peace, only by means of earthly prosperity; but our Redeemer affords peace, amidst adversity, and in death itself. The world gives false peace, by blinding men's eyes to their true condition, and their impending danger; but Christ gives peace, by enlightening our eyes and showing us our real position. The world gives peace with men; Christ, peace with God. The world's peace is rejected by conscience, except it be bribed or seared; Christ seals peace on the conscience, by sprinkling it with his blood. The world mocks us with a peace to be soon broken; Christ gives everlasting peace, which the world cannot take away. It cannot be said of the world, as of Christ, "that it gives a peace which passeth all understanding, to keep the heart and mind by Christ Jesus."*

In addition to repeating his former charge, "Let not your heart be troubled," Christ says, "neither be ye afraid." For the fearful are classed with the unbelieving, to whom the lake of fire is said to be reserved. The fear that has torment is cast out by perfect love. But he knew what scenes were coming, and into what temptations they would fall; how they would all forsake him and flee; and how Peter, through fear, would deny him. Against all this, therefore, he warns them, and in them, us, also; for "the fear of man bringeth a snare," and a fearful mind should be banished, by the internal calm and heavenly peace, which we ought to enjoy through Christ. This would keep our hearts as in a garrison.

"Ye have heard," says Jesus, "that I said to you, I go away, and come again to you;" "that I go, rather than am driven out of the world, that my departure is my own act, and that I shall do what others cannot, come again, after I have gone hence: if ye loved me, ye would rejoice." What, then, did they not love him? Yes, he himself declared (Jno. xvi. 17), "the Father loveth you, for ye have loved me." But they did not love him as they ought, or they would have

^{*} Arrian, in his comment on Epictetus, lib. 3, cap. 13, contrasts the peace which philosophy gives with that afforded by Cæsar, as Christ here says, "I give peace not as the world gives."

rejoiced more in his sayings; they would have thought more of his glory, and less of their own convenience; they would have caught more of his meaning, and have had higher delight in the thought of his going to the Father. When we really and ardently love our Christian friends, though we mourn their departure, it fills us with great joy to think that they go to their Father, and quit a world of sorrow, for the blissful presence of God. Beautiful is that sentence of Peter, who, speaking of Christ, says, "him, having not seen, ye love; in him, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory." One reason which Christ assigns for this joy, has created considerable discussion; "ye would rejoice because I said I go to the Father, for my Father is greater than I." Some consider these words a proof that Christ is nothing more than a man. We believe, that our Redeemer who was "in the form of God, humbled himself and made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." Now, as the Father never did this, the Saviour must be able to say, "My Father is greater than I;" for just as far as he made himself inferior to what he was, (being rich, for our sakes he became poor,) just so far, the Father must be superior. Whatever of reality there is in the Son's humiliation, there must be also in the Father's superior exaltation. But in the mediatorial office there were two states, the one of humiliation, in which Christ now was, and in which the Father was greater than the Son; and the other of exaltation, in which the Son would be seen sitting at the Father's right hand, holding equal dominion, and shining in equal power and glory. When, therefore, Christ was going to the Father, to lay aside his inferior state, and assume that equal glory which he now enjoys with the Father, this was, to the disciples, a rational cause of rejoicing; so that, if they loved their Lord, they would exult in seeing him pass, from an inferior, to a superior condition; and if they loved themselves, they would delight that their head, and representative, and patron, was about to rise to dignity and authority, which could not but be beneficial to them.

Our Redcemer, therefore, reminds the disciples that he now told these things before they came to pass, while he was yet in a state of inferiority; that, when his words should be fulfilled, and they should find to what glory he was exalted, and what reason they who loved him had to rejoice in the exaltation for which he went away, they might give full credit to all his words, and derive their full benefit. And who needs to be told how much this contributed to their peace, and how much it was calculated to soothe their sorrows for his departure? Does it not reconcile you, my dear hearers, to your lot in coming into the world after Christ has left it? What though you see him not here? Do you not reflect that, if you did, he would say, "My Father is greater than I?" But now that he is gone, and you know for what, your love to him compels you to acquiesce, and be glad, exulting to think that now you honour the Son even as you honour the Father, and see him, whom your soul loves, sitting on the Father's throne, at his right hand, with no marks of inferiority, but with every attendant of supremacy with which your affection could wish to crown him.

The Apostles, doubtless, would fain have had their Lord go on and fill up the night with such discourse; but he had only the two remaining chapters of this gospel to utter, and to crown them with his prayer, and then, turning from men and from friends, his converse would be with his Father, and his conflict with his foes. But, by the assurance that he would not talk much more with them, he virtually hinted at his approaching departure, and thus raised their minds to more vigorous and devout attention, that they might gather up the golden sands which were yet to run. Some of these few remaining words were sorrowful; for now Christ says, "The prince of this world cometh." Satan never showed himself more the prince of this world than in the hour of the crucifixion, when he collected all his subjects, the rulers of the darkness of this world—Jews and Gentiles, princes and people, priests, doctors, elders, Herod, Pilate, servants of the high priest and soldiers of the governor, together with

Judas, the apostate and the traitor. At the head of these, Jesus saw the grand enemy, as prince and general, lead the way, urged on by fear, knowing that it was by the Fall sinners were subject to his power. He knew, also, something of Jesus of Nazareth, as the Son of God, whom the Father had appointed heir of all things, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." When judged in Paradise, Satan heard of "the seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head;" and when he tempted Christ in the desert, the enemy felt that Jesus was mighty. Provoked to rage, however, the proud apostate rushed upon that which would prove his ruin; blinded, perhaps, as to the exact nature of Christ's redemption, and not fully aware how fatal would be this last event to the dominion of sin and the god of this world.

But "he has nothing in me,"* says Christ, using a very strong expression, if we may judge from the Greek. Satan had no such right or power over Christ as sin seems to give him over us. "The sting of death is sin," by which Satan has the power of death. He had nothing of this power over Christ, since "in him was no sin." Charged with our sins, he so paid the debt as to leave no sting behind. There was in his death no sign of the power of a conquering enemy, but the fullest manifestation of a willing sacrifice. Here was no danger of fatal consequences, all was settled on sure foundations, that if "he should make his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, he should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand." With such a conflict coming so near, he deemed it right to inform his disciples, that they could not expect to hear much more from him. Henceforth his soul was to be absorbed with the final settlement of our mighty debt. When David and Goliah fought the national duel, both the armies stood in awful stillness; he that was to sustain the shock of the prince of this world, would be "dumb as a sheep before her shearers," and all would seem to stand in breathless expectation of the event.

But as the disciples might naturally say, like Peter, when

^{*} Sacy uses this supplement, "Nothing in me which belongs to him."

warned of Christ's approaching sufferings, " Master, spare thyself, and avoid this conflict with the prince of this world," our Redeemer says that which should preclude all such appeals, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me command, so I do; arise, let us go hence." That he loved the Father he delighted to say, and who can doubt it? But who can tell all the extent of that love? As the Son of God, he infinitely loved the Father; as man, he could say "thy law is within my heart," that law of which the first and great command is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." As mediator, he loved the Father who appointed him, entering into all the scheme of redemption with infinite ardour. All his conduct, all his conversation spake his love. What converse he held with his Father in prayer! What heavenly things he said of his Father in conversation with the disciples! How zealously he laboured to inspire us with love to the Father! But as he had reminded us that we must love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth, so he now shows that in this he made himself the example. "As the Father gave me commandment, so I do." "This commandment have I received from my Father, that I should lay down my life for the sheep." Never was love put to so severe a test. But "many waters could not quench his love, nor the flood of death drown it." He was desirous, therefore, that the world should know it. Whether the world at large saw it or not, there was enough in Christ's death to prove his love to the Father, and leave all men inexcusable, if they did not know it. But he, no doubt, had reference to many, who, while yet of the world, were chosen out of it, and would learn by his death what would draw them out of it, according to his own prediction, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me."

"Rise, therefore," he says, "let us go hence." They had been fed with both temporal and spiritual food, and it was time they rose to do their master's work. They, doubtless, would gladly have lingered at this table, saying, "It is good for us to be here;" but he taught them, by his own example,

to quit the scene of pleasures, even sacred pleasures, to enter on the career of duty, though it led to death, if that death would show our supreme love to God. He led the way, and it was fit that they should follow. The chosen Apostles of the Lamb were to be eye witnesses of his sufferings, as well as of his glory; and by following him to the scene to which he was now going, they would be fitted for what awaited them. See them rise and go, the good Shepherd going before his own sheep, and leading them out. Behold and admire the omniscience of Christ, the sanctity, the power, the grace, the condescension, the wisdom, the benevolence, that shone in this divine discourse. Mark, how admirably every thing he said and did was calculated to soothe their sorrows, to fortify their spirits, and make them "more than conquerors, through him that loved them."

Can we close this meditation, without saying one word to those who have no portion in Christ? What a dreary contrast your state presents to all that we have seen of the believer's bliss! You may be relying on your own good sense, or on your learning, to make you acquainted with Christ; but this is mere moonlight reflected from ice, which never warms the heart with love, never prompts to holy obedience. The humblest pupil of the Spirit of truth has discovered in the Saviour a glory which human learning cannot show, and which inspires an affectionate deference to his commands that no unregenerate man ever pays.

The spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience had nothing in Christ, no principle on which temptation could operate; but in the men of the world, the prince of this world has every thing on his side. What reason have you, then, for flying to the Prince of life, and asking of him that Spirit which the world cannot receive! For if he dwell in you, when that moment shall arrive, that you also must "go hence," you will not, like "the wicked, be driven away in your wickedness," dying under the compulsion of an irresistible decree; but will say, with your Lord, "that the world may know that I love the Father, I promptly respond to his call, and glad to be with the Lord, say, 'Arise, let us go hence.'"

LECTURE XLL

CHRIST THE TRUE VINE.

JOHN XV.

Our Saviour, who is compared to the masses of inanimate matter, as the sun, the stars, or the rocks, and to irrational animals, as the lamb, or the lion, is also made known by imagery drawn from the vegetable world. For, if our first parents once learned their Maker from the garden of Eden. and if our Redeemer himself chose that of Gethsemane for his private devotions and redeeming agonies, should not we go to study redemption in the shady bower, and see Christ, as the tree of life, the rose of Sharon, and the living vine? This last emblem is thought to have been suggested by that which was then in view, the golden vine of exquisite workmanship, with which, Josephus says, Herod adorned the second temple. But, perhaps, the vines which abounded in the vicinity, and had supplied the wine that our Lord had just consecrated, as a symbol of his atoning blood, were in his eye, when he gave the figurative instruction which he follows by practical application.

I. The figurative instruction; v. 1—12.

Many things may be said on the resemblance between Christ and a vine; but it is more profitable to dwell on that which Christ suggests, than to indulge our own fancy. He here teaches the doctrine of connexion and culture.

1. The connexion between Christ and his church.

The vine is remarkable for sending forth branches in great numbers, and to a surprising extent, for it abounds in sap

and vegetative force; so Christ has in himself the fulness of the Spirit, which he sends forth to produce Christians, as we speak of the vine making branches. Of the Jews who rejected Christ it is said, "they were broken off by unbelief;" but to the believing Gentile, "thou standest by faith." The vine and the branches, though in some respects different, in others are but one; and though Christ and his people differ, as the master and the servants, he prayed, (not in vain) that we "all might be one in him." The vine, though spoken of popularly as one plant, has great varieties, some far surpassing others. The vine of Sorek is celebrated in Scripture as the most choice, and God said to Israel, "I planted thee a choice vine, wholly a right seed." Christ is that true vine of the most excellent quality, producing correspondent branches, Christians, "the excellent of the earth." Believers are Christ-like, they have kindred sentiments, similar affections, and walk as he walked. As you would not expect to find on a vine a branch of wormwood, nor a bunch of wild grapes on the vine of Sorek; so they who say they abide in Christ, must not walk in darkness; but "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." The shoots which the vine has put forth, it sustains and keeps alive; but if the stock be injured, or killed, all the branches must die; for they have no independent life. Such is the dependence of Christians for "the supply of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." He sent forth the vital sap, which at first produced, and must ever maintain, true spiritual life.

But we are especially taught the connexion between Christ and all Christian graces and works, which are the fruits of the true vine. Not every tree bears fruit; but the vine is distinguished for its fruitfulness, and one is now exhibited, bearing three thousand bunches. The grape is not valued merely as a fruit to be eaten, for the abundance of its rich juice furnishes wine; and that which is red being naturally called the blood of the grape, the Redeemer has made the sacramental cup an emblem of his blood. He who is the

true Vine has none but fruit-bearing branches: "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." "Herein," says Christ, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." A life of active zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men, is the natural consequence of deriving our spirit and principles from Christ, who made himself a sacrifice for these great ends. If we admire the purple clusters, as they hang on the vine; how much more delightful is it to see believers burning with zeal for the glory of their Saviour, longing to make him known to others, that men may be saved by him, and brought to consecrate their being to his glory! What a sublime and lovely sight the Lord's supper presents! Christ, the true vine, surrounded by his members, the branches shot forth from him, the produce of his grace; all living by union to him, their graces as clusters of sweet fruits, their "precious faith" deriving nourishment from him, cleaving to him for life! Living by him, they return to him the fruits of gratitude that are his due. Zeal burns to promote his glory; Hope aspires to live for ever with him; and yet Patience says, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change cometh." We are next taught,

2. The culture which our heavenly Father bestows on this vine: "My Father is the cultivator; every branch that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit."

The word husbandman is not happily chosen by our translators, and there is nothing in the original expressive of man. The Father, as the cultivator, is said to send his Son, to receive the fruits of the vineyard. It is his, therefore, to execute judgment, and to pass the act of excision from the church, when barrenness proves men to have no right to a place in it; or of chastisement, for the removal of evils from those who are disciples indeed, to make them more fruitful. In the culture of the vine, it is well known that the chief operation is pruning. To such an extent, indeed, is this necessary, that the unskilful would be afraid to do what is

requisite to secure the utmost fruitfulness of the vine. In the case before us, our Redeemer points out two different acts of the great Cultivator, in judgment cutting off the fruitless, and in mercy pruning the fruitful. With regard to the former, the whole church is spoken of under the figure of a vine. But while it is well known, that neither the whole visible church, nor any particular one, is so pure as to have no hypocrites; churches are addressed according to the character that belongs to the greater and better part, so that they are termed "saints, faithful brethren, elect and called." The painful truth is, however, sometimes disclosed, that not all are what they ought to be, and what, treating them according to their profession, they are denominated. Some are merely professed, or rather, pretended Christians; and therefore have no principle of perpetuity, even in their profession. That this mode of speaking of the vine, or the church, en masse, is adopted here, we learn from v. 3, where Christ says to the whole company before him, "Ye are clean," or purified; because Judas had been taken away from their company, he having gone out to execute his perfidious act, "that he might go to his own place." The body of the Apostles was purged of a false member, who was a branch, in appearance only. The excision of the traitor had been accomplished by the word of Christ, who had said to him, "What thou doest, do quickly." But as the Greek preposition, $\delta \iota a$, is usually followed by the genitive case, when it signifies the instrumental cause, and in this passage, the accusative follows, we may with propriety introduce the final cause, and consider Christ as saying, "For the sake of the word which I have spoken to you, and which you, my Apostles, are to publish to the world, I have removed the traitor, that my word may be proclaimed by faithful messengers, 'men of God, who speak as they are moved by the Holy Ghost.'" In this way the Syriac translates the text.

The case of Judas was designed to be a warning to others, to show that a branch in Christ, that is, a member of the church, who bears no fruit, shall be "taken away." That

this does not apply to a real believer, we may be sure; because he must have real faith, and this is itself a fruit. Such branches as are merely so in appearance, may be called by that name, as Judas was, by the lips of Christ, called friend, when he came to betray him with a kiss; though, before this, Christ had termed him "a devil." To put such away, forms a principal part of the culture of the vine. In the earliest periods of the church, there were those who troubled it, by professing to believe in Christ, and yet living in sin. Such were cut off, like Ananias and Sapphira. Of the Judaising professors, who clave to the works of the law for justification, Paul says to the Galatians, "I would they were cut off that trouble you."

Hear the warning voice—"Abide in me, and I will abide

Hear the warning voice—"Abide in me, and I will abide in you," for so should the ellipsis be supplied. "Let my words abide in you; for as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for severed from me, ye can bear none." Vain is mere profession, vain are all reasonings and systems of philosophy, falsely so called; they leave the man who is not really united to Christ, to wither and sink into indifference. Those excommunicated branches are gathered into bundles, which we call faggots, for the burning. How many of the once fair professors are now open apostates, the companions of fools and blasphemers! Simon Magus, who was at first baptised, and afterwards detected and denounced, by Peter, is said to have become a ringleader of a sect, that was most troublesome and injurious to the church. "Evil men, and seducers, wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. To such is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

In mercy, the Father prunes the fruitful branches, cutting away that which prevents them from bearing more fruit.

Here our Lord changes the figure. After speaking of the vine, as a whole, and of taking away the person of the false professor, that the church may be purified; he considers each individual believer as a distinct branch, and promises to prune it, by taking away that in us which is contrary to

our fruitfulness. The literal culture of the vine requires, not only that the whole of some branches should be removed, as useless and injurious; but also that those branches which are suffered to remain, should be curtailed, and much of them be lopped off, that what remains may bear more abundant fruit. There is in the best of men, what, not only does no good, but does much harm, and therefore must be put away, in order to render us more fruitful and more honourable Christians. For, unless our pride and self-confidence be put away, the fruits of faith and simple reliance on Christ will not abound; except our impatience of the yoke be removed, we cannot excel in patience, and self-denial, and meek submission to the divine will; if worldliness and conformity to the taste of the present generation of men be not put away, we cannot be fruitful in spirituality and conformity to God; and if our sloth and lukewarmness be not lopped off, how can we burn with zeal, and "abound in the work of the Lord?"

But the putting away of our excrescences requires the pruning knife, and its very name implies something sharp and severe. From a painful process we naturally shrink. This is sometimes felt in the operation of the word, which is said to be as "a sharp two-edged sword, separating to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is a dangerous mistake to suppose that the word does us no good, except it comfort us. Comfort is not always what we need. We often derive most benefit from that word which puts us to most pain. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." "Rebuke them sharply," says the Apostle, "that they may be sound in the faith." The preacher who probes the wound to the bottom, will, in the end, give more comfort than he who "heals the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Sometimes, however, the pruning is performed by the providence of God, in affliction; and where is the man who is fruitful in every good word and work, and has not been so dealt with as to lead him to say, "I am the man that has seen affliction?" Whereever there is eminence of religion, you may be sure that the person has been cut to the heart by dispensations that have severely tried him. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth."

But we shrink, as if some "strange thing had happened to us," when God deals with us thus. We are in danger of thinking him cruel; so forgetful are we of the doctrine of this passage, that every fruit-bearing branch must be pruned, to remove things that defile the soul, and check the fruits of grace. What contradictory creatures we are! How often we complain of that in us which we see to be injurious to our Christian character! How we cry to God to deliver us from that, which, making us barren or unfruitful, obscures his glory and our own evidences! And yet when he hearkens to our requests, we are frightened at the answer of our own prayers, and almost ask him to be deaf to our most importunate petitions!

We should welcome the severest discipline that may make us fruitful. For "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," says Christ. It is not the mere existence, but the abundance of the fruit that brings honour to the cultivator of the vine. If a few single grapes, or puny bunches, should be found on a vine, they may be hidden amidst the thicket of the branches, and the shade of the leaves; so that they who go by, see nothing to attract attention, or excite admiration of the skill of the vine dresser. It is only when the rich clusters hang on every branch, that they obtrude themselves on our attention, and compel the passenger to exclaim, "How well that vine is cultivated! How skilfully it is trained and pruned!" Oh that men, by seeing your good works, may be constrained to "glorify your Father who is in heaven!" To a real Christian, how forcible are the following words, "So shall ye be my disciples." For barren boughs are not branches of this fruitful vine; nor are a few rare berries capable of demonstrating that we grow on such a stock. The bare existence of religion cannot give us the "full assurance of faith." When every thing is so small

that it can scarcely be seen without the aid of a microscope, it is as if it were not; and if we would have the evidences of our religion always before our eyes, we must have a religion that is risen to some eminence; that we may be able to say, "nothing but the grace of Christ could raise me thus above the world, and self, and sin." "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Our discipleship ought to be manifest, and not to need to be sought after, as a grain of corn amidst heaps of chaff. Any discipline, however severe, that will make it plain, that we are Christ's disciples, should be reckoned great gain. What pleasure can we have from our corruptions, that can be compared with the benefit and bliss of increased religion? What pain can the purifying process create, that can be balanced against the delight of "abounding in all riches of the full assurance of hope?"

Among the fruits which divine corrections shall cause to abound, love is specified: v. 9.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Continue in my love." The most appropriate fruit of a branch in Christ, who is incarnate love, is an amiable affectionate disposition. Some are by natural constitution rough and severe; but as religion increases, they become meek and loving, like their Lord.

Obedience, too, is the proper fruit of a branch of Christ, who is our master, as well as Saviour. This generates love; "for if ye keep my commandments, ye shall abound in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandment, and abound in his love." They who have closely watched their hearts and lives, well know what irritability is generated by a violation of known duty, and what peace and love are the consequence of Christian obedience.

All this was said to open for you a perennial spring of joys divine. In defiance of all the sorrows that were now rushing in upon the Saviour's soul, he could say, "These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." What joys could be

compared with those of the man of sorrows? The pains that we may feel from the prunings that are necessary to secure our highest fruitfulness, serve but to make us partners in Christ's bliss. The joy that was set before him began now to abound, as his sufferings abounded; and when we find that God is glorified in us, and that our being disciples of Christ is made sure to us, "we glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."

Nor is it to be reckoned the smallest of our pleasures, that, if we "abide in Christ, we may ask what we will, and it shall be done for us." Does this seem so bold as to require some explanation? Let it be known and remembered, that, influenced by our union to Christ, we ask nothing, for we desire nothing, but what he loves to give, and has promised not to withhold.

II. The practical application: v. 13 to end.

Our Lord having, by the figure of the vine and its branches, taught us how intimate is the union that subsists between him and us, now proceeds to display his own love to us as parts of himself, and to warn us, that we must, like himself, be the object of the world's hatred.

1. Behold how Christ has loved us: v. 15.

"Henceforth, I call you not servants, that is, not mere servants; but I have called you friends, as Abraham, the father of those who are justified by faith, was called the friend of God," who treats the children of Abraham in the most friendly way, inspiring us with the confidence of friendship, and indulging us with all the familiarity which that honourable name implies.

The mere servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but is expected to obey commands, ignorant of his master's designs. But Christ says, "I have told you all things that I have heard of my Father;" laying open the councils of the eternal mind, as a man would disclose his plans to a friend. "God said, shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I am doing?" In proportion as we study his word, we

become conscious of being Christ's confidential friends; for nothing is more gratifying to him than to have his kindness met by reciprocal confidence, and to obtain full credit for all the friendship of his heart.

In choosing us to fruitfulness, Christ shows his love. Our translation is too feeble; for our Lord's words should be rendered, "it is not you that have chosen me; but it is I that have chosen you." We were not the originators of this good thing; but "we love him because he first loved us." Mark the contrast, I and you. I, the supreme Creator and Lord; you the creatures, who are but dust. I most holy and blessed; you fallen, guilty, and wretched. I who have no need, and you who have infinite need of me. I whom you ought to have chosen, but have not; yet I, who was under no obligation, have chosen you. As predestination to all good follows on the election of us from the rest of the world, so Christ says, "I have ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit," alluding to his preceding discourse on the vine. I shall, therefore, only remind you, that you are chosen that your fruit should remain; that it should not be like those false appearances of fruit, which too often come to nothing. If our promised fruits are blasted and withered. and end in apostacy, it proves that we have no portion in this blessing. Nothing but fruitfulness, and permanent enduring holiness, can give evidence of election. But, if we bear fruit, and this remains, to glorify God, and benefit men, let us never forget to whom we owe it.

By giving prevalence to our prayers, our Redeemer shows his love. To such influence at the throne of heaven has he exalted us, that he has permitted us to use his name, with an assurance, that whatever we thus ask, the Father will give it. What do not we owe to the kindness that has given us this patent of success? How highly should we value our privilege! How diligently should we improve it! Those who cannot pray in vain, should "pray without ceasing." What fervour should this impart to our prayers! What attention, what confidence, attract to that name on which depends all our success! How anxiously should we mark the connexion

which our Lord has here established between his election and our prayers! For, again, he speaks of his own elect as those who cry night and day to him. If such is Christ's love to us,

2. Behold the world's hatred: v. 17 to the end. Having repeated his charge to us, to love one another, he shows us that we shall have much need of the fellowship of saints, as a refuge from the enmity of the wicked. The origin of that hatred is shown, in order to preserve us from taking offence.

"Ye know that the world hated me, before it hated you." Why, then, are we blamed for the hostility of the world, as if we made religion unnecessarily odious? Are we wiser than Christ, to find the way to be true to religion, and yet keep fair with the world? If some, who call themselves Christians, have been the world's favourites, what does it prove? That "they are of the world; for the world will love its own." "Likeness," says the Greek proverb, "is the mother of love." There is, indeed, hatred enough among sinners; but this arises from particular differences, while, in the general character of enemies to Christ, they are agreed, as Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and the Jews, merged their differences in crucifying the Lord of glory. What is there in the world's love that should so strangely fascinate us? It is but the agreement of wolf with wolf, or the band that ties together brands for the burning.

"If, then, you are not of the world," says Christ, "but I have chosen you out of it" (for here again the election is ascribed to him, as it usually is to the Father,) you are separated from the world, as gold taken from the dross, and should be ready to say, "Let me be hated with Christ, rather than loved with the world." But we cannot bear to be hated, as he was. Who are we, then? Is the servant greater than his lord? Are we more worthy of being loved than Jesus Christ was? In him there was no cause of enmity, yet he bore it meekly; in us there is much that deserves it, and yet we cannot bear it. "If they have persecuted me," he says, "they will also persecute you." But persecution is too rude

for our delicate flesh. "If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." Far more terrible than all the personal ill-treatment given to the Apostles, was the rejection of their message; but their Lord fortified their spirits, by reminding them how his word was rejected.

"All these things they will do to you for my name's sake." If to bear the name of him who came to save and bless the world, is enough to draw upon us its hatred, to be rejected by such a world is an honour; we may glory in it, and say, "For thy name's sake I would be hated by the universe." Some would pretend, that, with all their hostility to what is peculiarly Christian, they have a great regard for Deity. But Jesus says, their hatred to you is, "because they know not him that sent me." Is not that lingering desire after the world's good word, that impatience of the cross that we feel, the offspring of a secret notion that the good opinion of the world is worth something, that its favoured sons should be courted and met half way? How long will it be ere we believe Christ's words, that the world knows not God; so that if we are swayed by it, we suffer the blind to lead us, who profess to see?

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin." For though "there is not a man that liveth and sinneth not," and the Gentiles, to whom Christ did not come, are said to be living in sin; yet the aggravations of those who rejected the Saviour, made the rest of the world appear comparatively sinless. All other crimes vanish before that of the men who "killed the Prince of life." They have no cloak for their sin. Some cover their guilt by the pretence, that if they could hear a preacher who said nothing foolish, and did nothing wrong, they would believe; but this cloak is torn from those who heard him, "who spake as never man spake."

As Christ's words were confirmed by his works, he says, "If I had not done among them what no other man did, they had not had sin. Now they have both seen and hated me and my Father." For what could be seen in the Father but omnipotence, omniscience, wisdom, benevolence, holi-

ness, and truth? And were not all these seen in Christ? But when men saw the Father in the Son, they hated them both. When the "God that quickeneth the dead," was displayed at the tomb of Lazarus, they went away and "consulted to kill Lazarus also, because on his account many believed on Jesus." So false is the pretence to attachment for natural religion, while men reject that which is revealed. For "he that hateth me," says Christ, "hateth my Father also." Their nature is one, their characters are one, and we cannot separate them so as to hate this and love that. What evidence do they produce of regard for Deity in the abstract, of a devotional spirit, and of zeal to spread the knowledge and love of the author of their being, who reject the Bible, and the Saviour, its grand theme? "But this has come to pass," he says, "that it might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me without a cause." As all the blame, so the whole injury rested with themselves. Christ was unhurt, as he was unblamable; though slain, he was not injured; and his people, though murdered, were glorified; for "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony." The rabbinical school makes a remarkable confession, that the second temple was destroyed, not for want of zeal for its rites, not for the sin of idolatry which polluted the first temple; but because of the *gratuitous hatred*, which they, not knowing how to explain, have reserved as a sort of cabalistic crime, to account for something which was to them unaccountable.

By the effusion of the Spirit, the sin of the world was still further aggravated. The description of the Spirit, as he "who proceedeth from the Father," has given rise to a world of disputation. On this point, the Greek and Latin churches divide; the former maintaining that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only; the latter, that he proceeds from the Son also. The Latins having inserted "filioque" in the Nicene creed, are accused by the Greeks of falsifying the symbol, in order to introduce and support heresy. Neither party seems to have thought it worth consideration,

that this text speaks of the mission and official work of the Spirit, rather than his person. Not that this passage has nothing to do with the technical question. For it is a theological axiom, that the order of the Divine persons regulates the order of their operations. The Father sends the Son and the Spirit. But as Christ also sends the Spirit, some argument may be derived for what is called the procession of the Spirit from the Son. The Greeks have reason for asserting, that the procession of the Spirit from the Father, is all that is here asserted; but as the Saviour said, I will send the Spirit, he seems to have introduced the additional clause, "who proceedeth from the Father," in order to show that the Spirit does not proceed from the Son alone.

This Spirit of truth comes as a witness to Christ, to which the Apostles refer, when they say, "We are witnesses, and so is also the Holy Spirit, which God has given to them that obey him." That the world stood out against this testimony, after all the mighty signs wrought by the Holy Spirit, in attestation of the Gospel, was such an aggravation of its sin, that its enmity to us should give us no offence.

"Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Mahomed pretended to a revelation from heaven, to prevent his followers from coming at all times to his tent; but Jesus laid open his whole heart and life to those who were his chosen witnesses. By the deep study of their narrative, and the ardent love of its great theme, be you, also, Christians, living witnesses to the world, that there is in Christ and his religion, a glory altogether divine.

LECTURE XLII.

CHRIST'S FAREWELL.

JOHN XVI.

There is extant in our language a singular little volume, consisting entirely of farewell sermons, delivered by the non-conformist ministers, on quitting their livings, when, as was observed by a distinguished man, "two thousand of the brightest lights of the establishment were put under a bushel." The book, though exceedingly defective, is deeply interesting, not merely for the sake of the noble army of confessors, but because each sermon closes with the word "farewell."

But what shall we say of the farewell sermon of Jesus Christ, the prince of preachers, "the bishop of souls?" To his adieu we are now to listen. It is true, that the anguish excited by a farewell, is here, happily for us, diminished by the thought that the preacher did not resign all care of our souls; for he "has an everlasting priesthood." He was now, however, quitting the pastor's chair on earth, to sit down in his episcopal throne, in the highest heavens. This, far from diminishing, should immensely increase, the interest we feel in listening to the sermon by which he gave us over to the tuition of them that heard him, and the ordinary pastors who re-echo their testimony. These last gracious words from him who is, at this moment, watching over the whole flock, may be divided into two heads.

I. The expediency of Christ's departure.

As the thought naturally arises in our minds, how will it

go with us when our friend and patron has departed, our Redeemer, in faithful kindness,

1. Sounds the alarm of persecution.

"They will put you out of the synagogue," which was a species of excommunication, that deprived a man of all help from his own nation. Nay, "whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service." Such was the opinion of those who shed the blood of the proto-martyr Stephen; and such the notion of the heathen, who, when they imagined Jove was angry, vociferated, "The Christians to the lions!" So fatal are the consequences of ignorance. When the time is come, and we remember that Christ has told us these things, then we feel the benefit of instructions which we before could not duly appreciate. On the day of the resurrection of Christ, angels reminded the disciples of what Christ had said to them, which they did not then understand. They remembered his words, and found all their use. When Christians, thrown into gaol, and led away to death, recollected that their Lord had told them that thus it would be, they were comforted with the thought that it was no proof they had done wrong, because they were brought into trouble. But it was not necessary to say so much at first, and our compassionate Friend did not wound or alarm them before the proper time.

"But now I go to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?" They had, indeed, said something very like it, but not in the sense which Christ has in his mind. Peter asked, "Whither goest thou?" And Thomas said, "We know not whither thou goest." But Christ having exploded their false notions of a mere local removal to some other part of the earth, they ought to have embraced the opportunity to inquire more fully into the scene of his future abode. They were too heavy hearted, however, to put a question that would have led to relief. We often feel so full as to be unable to tell our grief, or to apply to the proper source of consolation. The thought of their Lord's absence, was, to the disciples, trouble even unto agony. For no language can describe the sorrow that fills a

heart which truly loves the Saviour, at the thought of being separated from him. This was honourable to their sincerity, their attachment to their Lord, and their reliance on him for everything; but if they had asked him more about his future abode, they would have learned from him that which would have made their hearts rejoice.

2. Our Redeemer shows how he secures our interests.

"I tell you the truth." Strange that it should be needful to say this to us! How delicately severe is the reproof which this gives to our unbelief! "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come."

The Spirit could not be given, while Jesus was not yet glorified; because his sacrifice was the grand meritorious procuring cause. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." It was manifestly just that the highest display of divine favour should not be granted, till sin was rolled away by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. It was also fit that Christ should not bestow his loftiest benefits, till he entered into his glory. While he said, "The Father is greater than I," inferior blessings best suited his humiliation; but when he went to the Father, to sit at his right hand in full glory, loftier favours were accordant with his exalted state. Should there be nothing reserved to prove that he was no longer in a state of inferiority? And, if any thing, what more suitable than this most royal gift? It was therefore decreed that he should, as a high priest, enter into the holiest of all, with his own blood, and having put on his garments of glory and beauty, and sat down, as Melchisedec, a priest on his throne, should thence bestow his royal gifts. Thus the psalmist sung, "Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among us." Aaron's rod did not blossom, and bud, and put forth fruits, till it had been hidden, by being laid up in the holiest of all. Nor did Christ's priesthood show its full glory, till he entered within

the veil. The Jew's feast of tabernacles followed the sacrifice of the passover, and still more closely the great day of atonement. If we cannot have the full enjoyment of the Holy Spirit, but by parting with Christ's humanity, it was expedient that he should depart, in order that the Comforter might come. Christ's bodily presence was something more palpable, more striking to our senses, than the Spirit, who is a blessing more invisible, addressed to our faith, rather than our sight. Which, then, should be preferred by those who duly appreciate the greater spirituality of the Gospel above the law? The Jewish religion was called carnal and worldly, and was adapted to a more infantile state of things, when believers were treated as children, whose senses must be struck. But the Christian dispensation was heavenly and spiritual, addressing the soul, rather than the body, and calculated thus to call us off to things which affect the immortal spirit. Besides, the bodily presence of Christ was, from its very nature, local, confined to a certain spot; as we do not admit the Lutheran doctrine of the deification of his humanity. Whatever benefits we might derive from Christ's body, they would be necessarily confined to one part of the earth, and to one portion of our race, and could not be imparted to a second, but at the expense of the first. It was suited to the limited religion of the Jews; but it was expedient that it should be exchanged for the gift of the Spirit, who, sustaining no mere local character, and not having taken an inferior nature, acts simply by his omnipresent deity. He, filling all places, removed not from one, in order to be imparted to another. How much better this accords with the universality of Christ's religion, I need not say; nor need I show how it promotes universal philanthropy, as we fear no privation of his presence, because it is granted to others at the opposite extremity of the earth. The bodily presence of Christ struck the senses, indeed, but did not necessarily produce any saving effect. Multitudes saw him, and heard him, and touched him, who did not believe on him, and were not saved by him. But the Spirit is a saving blessing to all to whom he comes, bringing with him light, to the understanding; tenderness, to the heart; fidelity, to the conscience; and salvation to the whole soul. What satisfaction, then, should it inspire, to hear Christ say, "If I depart, I will send this Spirit to you!" Who would not wish Christ to go, that he might take all his regal honours, and not merely sit down to rest after such labours, but commence a more glorious style of working, suited to his exaltation, giving with royal hand what he had bought when he was delivered over, bound as our surety? Why should he not do every thing that he judged expedient for us, and indulge all his love, by bestowing on us that other Comforter, which he destined for us?

To reconcile us to the exchange, the Spirit's operations are enumerated. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." v. 8.

Here, again, the personal pronoun is introduced emphatically, and almost pleonastically, as if Christ were anxious to teach us the personality of the Holy Spirit. The scene of his operations is said to be the "world," to show that the sphere of his influences would not be limited as was the field of Christ's preaching, to the nation of the Jews; but that he would descend on all nations, and the blessing of Abraham would come on the Gentiles by their receiving the promised Spirit. The Spirit comes, indeed, to deal with the ungodly for their conversion; to convince, which signifies so to demonstrate the truth as to bring it home to the conscience, and compel the whole soul to yield to the conviction. The Spirit acts the part of a teacher of truths, not previously admitted, but rather resisted. That resistance he vanquishes, and proves himself victorious over ignorance and enmity. "The Gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," is the "rod of Christ's strength, which he sends forth out of Zion, and thus rules among those who had been his enemies." Who shall describe how this Paraclete bends the mind to attend to the things spoken in the word; gives the heart of flesh, soft and yielding, instead of the hard and

obstinate stony heart; causes the understanding to see the reason of things; creates a desire to obtain the blessings exhibited, and at last inspires the faith of God's elect?

After the descent of the Spirit, far more clear was the knowledge of the truth than before, far more mighty and convincing was the word, far more wide and general its operation; so that the prophecy concerning Messiah was fulfilled, "He shall judge among the nations, and reprove or convince many people; and he shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth."

The Spirit was to convince, Of sin.

Of sin.

This we might have taken, in the general sense, as including all sin against God, had not our Lord particularly mentioned this sin, "that they believe not on me." Till we are enlightened by the Spirit, we have scarcely any other notion of sin than as something that God has chosen to forbid, and to threaten with punishment. But by the Spirit's convincing power, we learn the intrinsic evil of sin, the misery it necessarily creates, and the absolute necessity of a holy being and a just moral governor showing his disapprobation, and his determination to oppose it. The Spirit especially convinces men of the sin of not believing on Christ. This is the greatest of crimes, including all others, and binding all others on the soul. "He that believeth not has made God a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God gave of his Son." When our Lord said, "the Spirit shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me," he manifestly referred to the Jews, who had been favoured with his ministry, and had rejected him through unbelief. The Spirit, therefore, came to convince them, that in this they had awfully sinned.

Of righteousness, also, the Spirit convinces.

This is the opposite of sin, especially as to our standing at the bar of God. As sin is a violation of our obligation to the moral governor, and a breach of his law, exposing us to condemnation; so righteousness is that which meets the demands of the law, and harmonises with the claims of God

and our relation to him, giving us a right position at his tribunal, and a power to lift up our heads, not condemned, nor ashamed. Under the guilt of sin, and destitute of righteousness, we are filled with a vain conceit of our own merit. While unconvinced by the Spirit, we have no notion of that one righteousness, by which alone man can be justified. It is the work of a divine teacher to convince us of the mystery of evangelical righteousness, which is so remote from ordinary human apprehensions, that it seems foolishness.

The argument by which the Spirit would convince the world of this righteousness, was, "because Christ went to the Father, and they would see him no more." The last words must be taken cautiously; for all the disciples saw Christ after his resurrection, and Stephen, Paul, and John, beheld him after his ascension. But the disciples would no more have the opportunity of living with Christ within sight, as they had hitherto done.

Let us rouse ourselves to a careful consideration of the force of Christ's reasoning. When the world had crucified him, they thought they had proved him an impostor, because they had been able to drive him out of the world, and he was no more seen. But, on the descent of the Spirit, Peter said, in the face of the foe, "Jesus being at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, has shed forth this which ye now see and hear. This Jesus whom ye have crucified, has God made both Lord and Christ." This, then, proved that his death was not the consequence of his weakness or their triumph. It was no proof that he was guilty of imposture. "The priests, under the law, were continually standing ministering often the same sacrifice that could never take away sin." If they went within the veil, they soon came out, for they had to repeat the same process again and again. "But this priest, when he had by himself offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from henceforth, till his enemies should be made his footstool." This the Spirit employed, in the Epistle to the

Hebrews, and in the rest of the New Testament, as he does still in all evangelical preaching, to prove the perfection of Christ's righteousness. Blessed are they who do not see Christ, and yet believe! Jews believed on him whom they had crucified, and Gentiles were induced to cast away their idols to the moles and to the bats, and to worship the God of Israel, and glory in the righteousness of Christ.

Of judgment, the Spirit convinces.

This term, so frequently employed in the Old Testament, This term, so frequently employed in the Old Testament, often means moral government in all its extent and glory. Righteousness and judgment are connected, sometimes the one having precedence, and sometimes the other. It was predicted that Christ should "set judgment in the earth;" and he declared that "for judgment I am come into the world." But the Spirit was to convince the world of this great article. When he teaches us our sin and the only righteousness by which we can be justified, he shows the glory of God as a moral governor. He convinces us that the moral world is placed under Christ's dominion, which sways the heart, and bows it to the obedience of faith. The regard which the pious have to the judgments and statutes of God, is often expressed in Scripture, as a proof of their subjection to the rule which God maintains over all whom he justifies. This judgment, therefore, includes what we ordinarily call sanctification, as appears from the words of our Lord, John xii. 31. The prince of this world being cast out, the reign of sin is succeeded by that of holiness, and God rules where Satan formerly wrought in the children of disobedience. Thus, Christ virtually includes in these three things of which the Spirit should convince, all that is enumerated by the Apostle, when he says, Christ is made unto us wisdom, that is to convince us of sin; righteousness for our justification; sanctification by our submission to God's judgments and moral rule; and so, finally, complete redemption from all the effects of sin.

Who but the Spirit can produce this conviction? Sinners do not understand God's judgment. Of the holiness of his nature and moral government they are willingly ignorant, because they hate holiness and love sin; nor can they form any conception of the internal work by which God makes his people pure in heart and therefore holy in life. But the Spirit of truth is called the Holy Spirit, because he makes us holy; and when he convinces of sin, and righteousness, he always goes on to sanctify.

The Spirit was to convict the world, "because the prince of this world is judged." There are three judgments of Satan mentioned in Scripture; the first, in Paradise, when he was doomed to be trampled in the dust; the second, on the cross, when Christ spoiled principalities and powers; and the third, at the last day, when Satan, that deceived the nations, should be cast into the burning lake. Of the second, this passage speaks. In a preceding chapter, the prince of this world was said to be about to be cast out; so now he is pronounced actually cast out. This was not only because Christ was beginning to feel the anguish by which sin, Satan's instrument of rule, should be put away; but, also, because this passage refers to the moment when the Spirit should descend. That the prince of this world was judged, the Spirit would show, by explaining the nature and design of Christ's death, and how he spoiled principalities and powers of their victory. Facts would convince. The hold of Satan over the Jews should be broken in thousands who would form the first Christian churches; and the heathen world would cast away the idols, which the Apostle calls the demons, they had worshipped.

The discourse is closed with Christ's final reference to the Spirit's coming. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show

it unto you."

Our Lord, urging forward to the cross, closes, not because

he had no more to say, but because they were not in a state to hear. Sorrowful, and comparatively unenlightened, they were unable to bear what was yet to be told, and therefore the gentle Shepherd leads the flock no farther than they are able to go. To their paraclete he hands them over; for, "when he," the Spirit, v. 13, "of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." Here, again, we have the personal pronoun, which was not necessary to the structure of the sentence, in the masculine, though it agrees not with the neuter word Spirit. The Apostles declared the whole counsel of God, and believers, "fitted for every good word and work, stood complete in all the will of God." So expedient was it for Christ to depart, that the Spirit might come. Then all the counsel of God should be laid open, as it could not be while yet Jesus was only about to offer the sacrifice, and pass through the state of the dead, and enter into the holiest of all, and take his royal throne, and make intercession for us.

But what language Christ employs concerning the Spirit! "He shall not speak of himself: whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." The first error that arose concerning the Holy Spirit made him a created being, and this text was naturally adduced to support it. As the heresy is dead, we

may leave it in its grave.

Those who now admit the Holy Spirit to be a person, own his proper divinity. But the distinction and order of the divine persons is a mystery inscrutable by us; though that order probably gave rise to the sequence of their operations, which is the thing to be here considered. The Spirit, then, acts, not like the Father, in an office of supreme authority, but, like Christ, as a delegate. He does not speak as if he came of himself, nor tell us any thing but what concerns the redemption of Christ. He games as the Spirit of the the redemption of Christ. He comes as the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Christ, sending him, speaks those things which the Spirit, hearing, repeats to the church. He told those other things which Christ suppressed. He will announce to you the things that are to come upon the church. In the book of Revelation, and all the prophecies of the New Testament, he throws light on the designs of God. "It is

he," says Christ, again employing the pronoun superabundantly, "that shall glorify me." How consoling to the disciples, who saw their master about to be degraded unto an ignominious death! "He shall take of mine, and show it to you. Think not that because I have said, he shall convince the world, that he will not afford you any advantages. Ye know not all my glory, as he shall show it, when he shall take up themes which ye have not entered into. From the skies he shall bring down information. How large the treasure is from which he shall draw, ye may know; because all things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, he shall take of mine and show it unto you." How clearly this proves the divinity of Christ I need not say; but I would again remind you of the proofs of the Spirit's personality here afforded. He is mentioned again and again; he shall guide you; he shall speak; and not of himself; but he shall hear. and what he hears speak to you; he will show you things to come; he shall glorify me; he shall take of what is mine, and then show it unto you." Hear now,

II. The parting words of our Lord; v. 16-22.

 These announce an approaching change.
 A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father." "Within a few hours, this temple of my body, on which you have gazed with delight, shall be hidden from your eyes. The tomb shall cover me. But then, again, in a little more than a whole day, (the Jewish sabbath, which we call Saturday,) you shall see me, risen from the tomb." When the veil closed upon the high priest, he was lost to the view of the people; but was soon seen again, coming out to bless them. The church was now come to a changeful season. Thick clouds hurried across the sky; and one of dreadful density soon hid the Sun of righteousness from view. It was then to shine on fairer worlds. Jesus would stand in the presence of the Father, into whose hands he had resigned his departing spirit. But quickly the dread thunder cloud would pass away, the skies clear up, and the Sun of righteousness burst on the church, "with healing in his wings."

This instructive warning elicited from the disciples a tautology of inquiries, that almost lowers them in our esteem, as if they perplexed themselves about what would have been plain to a child. Let us, however, not forget, that we stand on vantage ground. Admire, rather, the sincerity of the Evangelists, who confess all the darkness that beclouded their minds, before the Spirit came, to lead them into all the truth.

Those doubts which they were ashamed to avow, the Redeemer's perspicacious eye detected; and the relief they were afraid to ask, his compassionate heart bestowed, but in a hint so oblique, that it seems not much to increase their information, as if it were necessary to let the light in gradually upon their weak sight. Yet he speaks of his departure, in terms that manifestly allude to death in the most painful form. "Ye shall weep and lament." Even we, at this distance, with all the imperfection of our faith and love, cannot think of the agonies of the cross, without fulfilling the prophecy, "they shall look on me whom they pierced and mourn;" and how could the disciples actually see their Lord expire, without having "fellowship with him in his sufferings?" But what an aggravation to their woe, to see the world rejoice! The unfeeling crowd, led on by those who should have taught them better, "wagged their heads and reviled, saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it up in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross!"

But here was the consolation, "your sorrow shall be turned into joy." This is the bliss of religious grief, that it always ends in gladness. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." They who wept over the Saviour's death, not only rejoiced in his resurrection, but learned to glory in his cross, as the tree of life. See this illustrated by natural scenes. The sorrows of her that bare us, proclaim our fallen state; but, by a merciful alleviation of the curse, the pains of childbearing were soon forgotten, amidst the joys of maternal affection. A worldly family rejoices at the birth of "a pleasant child," the heir to an estate, the per-

petuator of a family name; but in the house of the righteous, there is joy in the increase of "the vessels of mercy;" for God has said, "I will be a God to you and to your seed after you."

"Your pains are coming on you, like those of a woman in travail," says our Lord; "but your pleasures, too, are on their march; for I will see you again, when I will no more appear to the world; and no fond mother ever gazed upon her first-born son, with such delight, as your hearts shall feel. when you see me again, risen from the dead." "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." This shall be the joy of your joy, that "no one shall take it from you." While the mother is rejoicing over her newlyborn babe, Death may be standing behind, poising his dart over her shoulder, to pierce her idol to the heart; or other causes may turn her joy to grief. But never, after they saw their Lord risen from the dead, did his disciples again sorrow, as before, at his death. They ever gloried in the cross, lived in immortal hopes, and possessed in Christ an inheritance that could not fade away.

2. These parting words appoint the mode of intercourse during Christ's absence: v. 23—27.

When friends separate, it is, in modern times, a relief to communicate by letter. Have we ever duly acknowledged our obligation to divine Providence for the art of writing, and the facility of communication by the post? Have we, on the receipt of a pious letter, blessed God for such a mode of maintaining the fellowship of saints? This relief, however, is limited to the present world. How shall we communicate with departed spirits? To their far distant world Christ was going, and what medium of intercourse will he appoint? Prayer. "I solemnly assure you," says Jesus, "that you shall go to the Father, making use of my name, with such freedom, familiarity, and confidence, that you shall not suffer by my absence. For the Father will be so accessible, through the force of my name, that he will as readily grant your requests, as ever I did, though it was never known that I refused a petition."

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." Did, then, the ancient church never use the name of the Messiah in prayer? Has not David said, "Behold, O God! our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed," or Messiah? Is not this Daniel's plea, "Now hear the prayer of thy servant, for the Lord's sake?" One learned man solves the difficulty, by saying, "they used not Christ's new name, of which he speaks in the Revelation; for though the ancient saints pleaded in the name of the promised Messiah, they did not pray in the name of Jesus, the high priest, who had made atonement." It is certain that hitherto it had not been the practice of the church to make that use of the name of Jesus which is the present characteristic of Christian worship. Now, however, our Lord says, "Ask, that ye may receive, and your joy be full." How kindly has he made our interest our duty, commanding, as well as permitting us, to ask; and bidding us receive pardon and grace, "more grace," till our joy abounds unto fulness, and we can hold no more! If our joy be not full, who now must bear the blame?

Clear as these instructions are, our Lord calls them "proverbs," or enigmas, compared with that flood of light which he designed to pour upon their minds. It was not, however, necessary to encourage them by the promise, "I will pray the Father for you;" for he assures them that the Father himself loved them. Having seen Christ among us in a state of condescension, as our brother, we can more readily believe that he loves us; while the Father's awful state and veiled majesty, seem to place him so far beyond us, that we can scarcely dare to think that he loves such creatures as we are. It is the utmost triumph of faith, to believe that the Father himself loveth us. Jesus, therefore, gave his disciples a reason which brought the proofs of that love down to consciousness; "because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God." But let not any suppose that the Father's love is merited, or procured, or elicited, by our faith and love. "For who has first given to him?" Our love to Christ is adduced as the evidence of

the Father's benevolence to us; for we never should have loved, had not the Father's love first given us such a heart. If, however, the complacent affection felt towards those whose characters are approved, is here intended; then, it is because you have been brought to love the Son, that the Father regards you with complacence. Observe how our love is connected with faith. He that believes not that Jesus came out from God, cannot love him, as heaven's best gift; but he who yields to the evidence of Christ's divine mission, exclaims, "Herein is love! we love him, because he first loved us." When the disciples remembered all the proofs they had given of unbelief and coldness, they must have wondered at the witness borne to their faith and love. These, happily for us, Christ can see, when so small, that they are almost invisible to ourselves or our fellow Christians. His eyes discern sincerity, and his heart forgives imperfection. Thus we are conducted to,

3. The final explanation of our departing Lord: v. 28 to the end.

"I came forth from the Father into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." They felt that he was here replying to what they durst not utter; and thus were compelled to believe that he came from the bosom of the Father. And who could doubt it, if he heard Christ reply to the very thoughts and workings of the heart? But, alas! we no sooner rise a few steps above our doubts, than we fancy we have reached the pinnacle of perfect faith, exclaiming, Now we believe, now we are sure! Thus we prepare for ourselves reproofs and humiliations! He that sounds the depths of our hearts, beyond the reach of our line, said, "Do ye now believe?" Yes; I have admitted that you do; but, even after the increase of your faith, which you have now rapturously avowed, the hour will come, nay, it "is come, when you will be scattered, every man to his own." Well might he then ask, Where is your faith? What! flee to hide yourselves in holes, terrified, because my hands are bound? Could you not trust my arm, when fettered? Can any human bonds render him who came forth from God powerless to save?

And then, where is your love, when you shall leave me alone? What! not one of you stay by his beloved master? Will all leave him to no other company, but that of the wicked, which is none at all to Jesus? For observe, he says, "you will leave me alone;" though troops of sinners were about him, from the moment he was apprehended, till he expired. Hear it and tremble, O ye children of the world; you are no company for Christ! But will no one of his Apostles turn back, with a look of affection, and say, "Let us go, that we may die with him?" "What is life without him? not worth having. What is death with him? not worth fearing. Can we, then, leave him to the wicked, all alone, without one friend to converse with? It must not be." But ah, there was not one that, shall I say, loved him well enough to act thus? Why should I not? For love must be proved by deeds, not by words! Yet these were the men who had just said, "now we believe; now we are sure;" and with all this fully in his view, our compassionate high priest said to them, "the Father loveth you; for you have loved me." So ready is he to make the best of us, bad as we are!

He could bear the desertion of friends, for he was assured that he should "not be alone; since the Father would be with him." But how can this agree with his doleful lamentation on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The judge may be said to have forsaken him. The withdrawment of the wonted smiles of heaven, attested the displeasure of the moral governor against our sins, for which Christ answered. Still his person and character were the objects of the Father's approbation, not only in death, but for death. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life. I give myself an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." Never was the Saviour more lovely in the Father's eyes, than when despised, rejected, and murdered by men; as Isaac never looked so fair

to Abraham's view, as when laid on the altar, waiting the stroke of death. This taught the disciples not to stumble at the cross, which was Christ's glory, not his shame. The love of God, is a counterpoise to the desertion of a world. In close converse with the Father, presenting himself to him as an atoning lamb, to satisfy the demands of his throne, Christ felt no want of human friendship. Though Jesus had predicted the disciples' unkindness, he was not the less solicitous, that in him they might have PEACE. This balm, religion claims as all her own. The world boasts her pleasures, her wealth, her glory, but she knows no peace. Often has the prince in gilded equipage, passing by the lowly cottage, said, "Ah, there is peace! Would God that I were there!" Sin has cursed this world with vanity and vexation of spirit. A mere man of the world, who reflects duly on the constitution of human affairs, will expect a perpetual recurrence of trials; but a Christian, after Christ's fair warning, will look with still more certainty for tribulation here. How thankful should we be, that our troubles are limited "to this world." Then, they are as the shadows of the clouds on a March day. What gratitude we owe to God, that we shall so soon leave them behind us, while all beyond is rest, and peace, and joy.

Thus end the discourses of Christ. Detached words or sentences, after this, he delivered, but no set speech, till death closed his lips. How soothing to reflect that he closes with words of peace! As the Old Testament ends with the word, "curse," the Jews repeat the preceding verse, to avoid ending with a word so ominous. We may dwell most pleasantly on Christ's last word to us. Never forget that your Lord, at parting, bade you "Be of good cheer." For if he has left you in a hostile world, it should be enough to make you cheerful, to hear him say, "I have overcome the world."

LECTURE XLIII.

CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

John xvii.

As it is by his prayers that a devotional person, or a minister of religion, is best known; nothing in all the gospels is more characteristic of Jesus Christ, than the intercession which we are now called to hear. How can we close our meditations on his preaching, so much to our edification and encouragement, as by meditating on that prayer, which brings down the Holy Spirit, who gives efficacy to the word of Christ? As Aaron, when carrying the blood of atonement within the veil, burned incense all the way, our great High Priest filled the sanctuary of the church with the fragrance of his intercession, when he was about "to enter into the holiest of all, with his own blood." Standing where he had spoken the three preceding chapters, our Lord crowns all his preaching with this prayer, which asks for his mediatorial glory-for the preservation of the elect-for the sanctification of his disciples—and for the unity and glory of the church.

I. Christ's prayer for his mediatorial glory: v. 1-5.

On the banks of the Kedron, probably, he lifted up his eyes to the heavens that were stretched over his head, and addressed their Maker, as his Father, to whom he presents,

1. The first petition,—"The hour is come; glorify thy Son."

In our most dangerous circumstances, we know not that our hour is come; but our Priest knew the time for offering

the evening sacrifice; and as the grand era was arrived, though the way to his future glory lay through the gates of a most awful death, in this prayer he seems, by faith, to swallow up the distance, and speaks of the redeeming work as done, and the reward as obtained. Observe, that he does not say, "glorify me," but, "thy Son," intending, perhaps, to show what is most true, and important to be noticed, that it was not for his own personal gratification that he pleaded, but for his official glory. The Scriptures present Christ to us in three distinct states; the first, as "The word who was in the beginning with God, and was God;" "who was before all things, and who made all things;" the second, as "The word made flesh, born of a woman, humbling himself in the form of a servant, to be made obedient unto death;" and the third, as rewarded for this condescension, by exaltation to supreme glory and dominion. Drawing near the close of the second state, Christ asks for the third, that in this he may glorify the Father. For he speaks not merely of physical power, but authoritative dominion over all flesh, or the whole race of man. Jesus Christ is prince of the kings of the earth; and the design of his universal dominion is, that he may give eternal life to as many as are given him.

For our sakes, he explains, saying, "This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Those who reject Christ's divinity, consider the Greek word, which we translate "only," as an adverb, and as belonging to the subject of the proposition, but it is an adjective, and belongs to the predicate; so that, instead of affirming that the Father only is the true God, to the exclusion of the Son, the Redeemer does but declare what all the believers in his divinity maintain, that the Father is God, that unique being, of whom there is only one true, though there may be many false gods. The Jews denied that the true God was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the Gentiles, that the only true God was; for they had gods many; but Christ asks for his final glory and dominion, that he might give

cternal life to all flesh, by making known to them the one only living and true God, and the only mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. An important reason why this glory should now be given, he assigns; "I have glorified thee, O Father, during my sojourn on earth, having seized every occasion to give thee honour;" and now, anticipating his own dying words, he says, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

2. The second petition is an exposition of the former.

As it stands in the original, it is, " Now glorify thou me, O thou Father." The time is made emphatic, as if to refer to the prophecy, that, "when his soul should make an offering for sin, he should have his portion with the great and the mighty." But, when he says, "glorify me with thine own self," he sweeps away the worldly dreams of the Apostles, with a strong, yet gentle hand; for this reveals no royal state on earth, but glory all divine in heaven, such as Christ had with the Father, before there was any such world as this. The Scriptures express the eternity of an object, by saying, it existed before the world was; but some, to avoid the admission of Christ's eternity, say that he had this glory in intention, or decree, which may be said of every one who obtains the heavenly glory; while Christ manifestly intends to express something peculiar to himself, and to distinguish between one period of his possession of that glory and another. It was in his last state, as the word made flesh, exalted to all the glory which he enjoyed with the Father before the world was in existence, that he was to bestow on the elect that eternal life which consists in the saving knowledge of the Father and the Son. He is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." Soon after this, he said to his Apostles, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations to do whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always."

It was not, then, as a man, that Christ asked for glory, as any pious person might, at the close of life, but as he "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily," and as

the Mediator, Saviour, and head of the church. He asked the Father to fulfil the words of David, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." The answer is announced by himself, the best interpreter: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne."

The power over all flesh that was required, in order to give eternal life to the elect, was exercised by Christ when the Jews, becoming bitter persecutors, were crushed, and the Christian church was saved out of the devoted city, Jeru-When the Pagan Roman empire raged as a dragon against the infant Christian church, the gods of the Pantheon were overthrown, and the banner of the cross was made to float over the capitol. Again, when the Inquisition seemed to place an insuperable barrier to the salvation of the elect, Christ employed his power over the nations to establish the Reformation, under whose shade the chosen found eternal life. But the time is yet to come which is to show, by the answer, the full import of this petition. For Christ has not yet displayed all his authority. "The Lord at his right hand has yet to strike through kings in the day of his wrath, and wound the heads over many countries." For when the full force of this expression, "as many as thou hast given him" shall be seen, and the great mass of the elect be called, Christ will erect a dominion over the world that will take out of the way every hindrance, and render all things on earth conducive to the interests of the kingdom of heaven. For this, therefore, we should constantly intercede.

II. The prayer for the preservation of the elect: v. 6-12.

These verses should moderate the censures thrown on preaching prayer; for our great Pattern here shows, that it is not improper for those who take the lead in prayer to interpose such explanations as may enable those who join, to "pray with the Spirit, and with the understanding also." By this intermixture of explanations and supplications we learn,

1. What our Redeemer had already wrought for us.

"I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world." "Whom he predestinated, them he also called;" for the operations of grace follow the election of grace; so that if the fruits of Christ's ministry appear few, they are all that the Father then gave him out of the world; and as it was life eternal to know the Father and the Son, Jesus had made the Father's name manifest, or had given the elect to know the true import of "the glorious and fearful name the Lord our God." Christ's preaching and his person were such a manifestation of deity, that he could say, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" and as he welcomed those whom the Father had chosen for his own, and given to him to redeem, he rejoiced that they had received as divine all he brought from heaven. Though the world attributed his miracles to Beelzebub, and his words to madness, the chosen saw divinity in his works, and heard the Father speak by his lips; "for I have given to them," says Christ, "the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee." What importance this stamps on Christ's words, which were given to him in the councils of heaven, and brought down by him to be spoken to us on earth! What consolation to the disciples, amidst their consciousness of much unbelief, to hear him say, "they have believed that thou didst send me!" Though it is soothing to hear our fellow Christians speak thus of us in prayer, as they cannot search the heart, it speaks their candour, rather than our sincerity; but when he who " is of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and does not judge after the sight of the eyes," declares that we have believed, we may exult in the full assurance of faith. Hear now,

2. What our Redeemer farther asked for us, he prefaced by saying, "It is I that pray for them." How much of the efficacy of prayer depends on him that offers it! "We know that God heareth not sinners." If Abraham, Job, Moses, Elijah had power with God, when they prayed; beyond them all, Jesus could say, "I know that thou hearest

me always." This is the angel from whose hands the prayers of the church go up perfumed. For them who believed on him he now prayed, that all believers might learn how much they owe to Christ, who ever liveth to make intercession for them, and what are the blessings that we should look for, as answers to his prayers. When he says, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine," he shows that his prayer, however restricted, went far enough. In the Greek a change is made, which requires us to read, "All my possessions are thine, and thine are mine." Who but a divine person could say this? If it be said to us, "all things are yours," it is because "ye are Christ's." As Christ's disciples, we may know that we are God's elect, and that our Redeemer is glorified in us, which to us, who often fear that he is dishonoured rather, is most consoling. But the Lord will fulfil the desire of them that fear him, and every one who sincerely does all things for the glory of God may hear him say, "I am glorified in them."

"I am no more in the world," says Christ; "but these are" -showing how serious an affair it is for creatures, frail as we are, to be in a world of temptation such as this is. To the Apostles, who had been accustomed to cling to the side of their Lord, it was most alarming to know that they were to be left here, when he was gone. How consoling, then, to hear him say, "I come to thee, Holy Father: keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me." Griesbach gives another reading, which is supported by the Syriac, "keep, through thy name, which thou hast given me." The name of God was given to him that appeared in human flesh, and the attributes of deity are our guardians: but it is by the knowledge of the divine name, or an acquaintance with the true character of God, as seen in Christ, that we are kept to the day of redemption. Our great Advocate here prays, that the honours and powers of deity may be exerted to save us to the uttermost.

The effect of this conservation is thus expressed, "that they may be one as we are." Our unity is the very end of our

preservation. Numerous and weighty are the reasons which demand the unity of Christians; and, as numerous and weighty are the beneficial effects of that union. But, when it is compared to the union between the Father and the Son, though comparisons do not imply the equality of the things compared, how holy, how glorious, how blissful must be that union of saints!

Our Redeemer farther pleads, that, as long as he was with us in the state of humiliation, he himself kept the souls of the disciples, through the divine name; so that, though exposed to danger, and unable to keep themselves, not one of those who were given him by the Father was lost. But Judas is introduced in such a way, that some contend he was one of those whom the Father gave to Christ. The Greek words, however, are well known to be employed, where not mere exception, but direct opposition is intended; as, where it is said, "there shall not enter into the heavenly city any thing that defileth, but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life;" and where it is said, "many lepers were in Israel, in the days of Elijah, and to none of them was he sent but to Naaman the Syrian." No one supposes that Naaman, the Syrian, is called a leper in Israel; nor is Judas called one of those whom the Father gave to Christ. In such cases, the preceding verb should be repeated, and we should read, "None of those whom thou hast given me is lost; but the son of perdition is lost, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." For Christ is not confessing that he had failed in one instance, and lost a soul whom the Father gave; but he is pleading his faithful care of them all, and asking that the Father would now take the same care of those whom the Saviour was about to leave behind him in the world.

III. Prayer for the sanctification of the disciples; v. 13—19. If, when our Advocate says, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now I am no more in the world," we ask, Should not these words have been reserved till Christ had passed through the veil? he answers, "These things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." Had he deferred this intercession

till he had entered the most holy place, where we could not have heard it, what consolations would the church have lost! This prayer of Jesus has cheered the Christian's darkest hours, and made him partaker of what our Saviour calls, "my joy."

That we may be preserved from evil, our intercessor asks, introducing the request, by saying, "I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them." It has long been a maxim with the philosophical observers of mankind, that "truth begets hatred;" and because Christ gives us his word of truth, the world hates us. For the word of Christ, when it dwells in us richly, operates like leaven, makes us so unlike the world, and inspires such zeal to make the world like us, that a moral conflict invariably follows. "They are not of the world," says Christ, "even as I am not." How far Jesus was from symbolising with the world, I need not attempt to show; but ah, who among those that profess his religion, can be thus described, "they are not of the world, just as Christ was not?"

But though it is painful to be in the midst of a world of contrarieties, where we are hated; and though we, in such circumstances, are apt to think of nothing but escaping from them; our Lord, who loves us better than we love ourselves, says, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world." Why? It was desirable that some specimens of the election of grace should always be preserved in the world; it was honourable to God to show what his grace could do to save some, amidst an apostate world, as Lot in the midst of Sodom; it was an honour put upon them who bore up against the tide, and preferred God to the whole world; it was a high imitation of Christ, and a prolongation of his testimony against the rebellion of men; it was, by deferring their heaven for a while, a means of preparing them for it, and of increasing their final reward; it was essential to the salvation of men, to preserve those who were to lay the founda-tions of the Christian church; it was mercy to the wicked to spare those who were the accepted intercessors for others; it was a blessing to the world to possess those who, labouring for its salvation, reflected the image of Christ, and showed men what they ought to be; and, finally, it was an alleviation of the curse which sin had brought on a world that would be intolerable, if there were no subjects of grace to be the salt of the earth, and lights of the world.

But as these valuable ends are not attained without great risk, the friend of our souls pleads, that we may be kept from the evils which abound in this world, and from which we cannot preserve our own souls; for they only whom God keeps, are well kept. If we are guarded from "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which are not of the Father but of the world," we owe the praise to him who maketh intercession for us. How much delight he takes in seeing us so preserved, he shows, by repeating the words, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." O that he may enjoy this pleasure in us!

Having thus prayed that we might be kept from what is evil, he pleads that we may be conformed to all that is holy. "Sanctify them, through thy truth; thy word is truth." To sanctify, is to make holy, or like to God, who is the pattern of all moral excellence, and whose law, which is the expression of his mind and will, is the rule of all holiness. His word, therefore, which is the revelation of his mind, is the consecrated instrument of sanctification. For holiness consists in conformity to truth, or the true relations of things, especially our relation to God; so that error must be the parent of sin, and in proportion as we depart from the word of truth, we wander from the way of holiness. He who says, "I am the Lord that sanctifieth you," he who gives to means and instruments, all their efficacy, employs and blesses nothing but the truth that he reveals and loves.

Our Lord pleads for their sanctification thus, "As thou hast sent me into the world, so have I also sent them." The world will never be saved by men that are like it; and as Christ came from the bosom of divine love, all holy, to save us from sin, so he prays that his Apostles may be made holy like himself; that they may be fit to go forth, as he did,

to save a world from sin. Again, our Advocate pleads, " for their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." As setting apart to sacred uses, is the radical idea of sanctification; we must not be surprised to hear Christ speak of sanctifying himself; though "in him there was no sin" from which he could be cleansed. When sanctification is applied to a living sacrifice, it signifies its presentation to God. Jesus here speaks, as at once high-priest and sin-offering. "I myself, sanctify myself;" for he was the priest that presented, and the offering that was presented; making his ownself an offering for sin, by which we are sanctified. For this great truth of Christ's atonement becomes the means of our sanctification; as it was fit that the meritorious cause should have the honour of being the instrumental cause of our restoration to the lost image of God. Where are sinful men made holy, but where this truth is known, believed, and felt, that "Jesus loved us and gave himself an offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour; that he might sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water by the word?" We are here taught, that if we would be holy, we must employ for this end, the word and the cross of Christ.

IV. Prayer for the unity and glory of the church.

To ascertain when the language of Scripture applies exclusively to the persons to whom it was originally addressed, and when it belongs equally to all believers, is often as important as it is difficult. The Apostles of Jesus were at once his disciples, whose religion was a pattern to all, and his special ambassadors, whose office and prerogatives have descended to none. In the midst of their circle, and where they alone were ear-witnesses, this prayer was offered; so that if we had been left to our own unaided reasonings, we should have been embarrassed to know whether we ought to apply the whole, or any part of it, to ourselves. Had we appropriated some of its instructions and consolations, these would, for want of positive authority, have been deprived of half their value. Most gratefully, therefore, should we hear our Saviour say, "Neither pray I for these

alone, but for them also who believe on me, through their word." If we, through the Apostolic testimony contained in the Christian Scriptures, believe on the Son of God for salvation, we may see him dart a gracious look on us, and hear him plead our cause.

1. He pleads for the unity of the church.

That they all may be one, whether they were called in the earliest or the latest ages of the world; whether they were of more polished or more barbarous nations; whether they were of the rich and great, or the poor and despised among men; whether they were of the learned or illiterate. Christ has forbidden to divide his people into castes, saying, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Of this unity, our Lord, again, makes that which subsists between the Father and Son, the pattern; and when he afterwards prays, "That they all may be one in us," he shows that it is by being in the Father and the Son, we become one with each other; so that our advancement in communion with God promotes the fellowship of the saints; for, as the radii of a circle approach the centre, they approximate to each other.

With what force should this prayer for union among Christians fall on our hearts, when we hear Christ say, "That thus the world may believe that the Father sent him!" The conversion of the world has been greatly retarded by the want of union among Christians; for "divide and destroy" has been the enemy's maxim. Christianity made rapid progress towards universal victory, while "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul;" but soon the enemy, that soweth tares, created divisions. The Christian church became a scene of strife and contention, and the strength, which should have been spent against the common foe, was consumed in struggles against each other. This has been our weakness and our shame. "You must agree among yourselves, what is Christian religion," says the infidel, "before you expect me to receive it. If I join one party, the other will condemn me, and I cannot agree with you all, for you agree not among yourselves." This mischievous division has been greatly fomented by a spirit of

domination; for Rome, which has contended for the unity of what is called the catholic, or universal church, under one living head, the Pope, has destroyed the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to create a unity of form, in the bond of despotism. The setting up of heads of parties, and human authority, has contributed to the same pernicious effect; for while one says, "I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos; one, I am of Calvin, and another, I am of Arminius;" the church has been prevented from proclaiming, with united voice, "I am of Christ." If ever we are to become one, "the loftiness of men must be brought low, and the Lord alone must be exalted in that day." To bow, then, as brethren, to one common Lord; and to make one inspired word the common standard of faith and practice, is the only way to union. The Bible Society shows the rallying point. Other intimations of an approach to unity we see; for the fierceness of party has, in many cases, subsided, and Christians of different names and different hues hold, for missions to the heathen. friendly communion heretofore unknown.

But, ah, what progress have we yet to make, ere the world will be turned to the faith of Christ, by feeling compelled to say, "See how these Christians love one another!" Yet this shall, at last, be effected. For Christ asks it, and cannot plead in vain: "him the Father heareth always." The spirit of prophecy has exhibited to the eye of our faith, the world subdued to the sceptre of Christ. We are bound, therefore, by our belief of the Scriptures, and our allegiance to Christ, to view the whole world as his destined empire, to labour to make it so, and to think nothing done while this continues undone.

The question, then, remains, how shall this be effected? "By act of parliament," said one, in his simplicity and sincerity; "by fire and sword," said the Inquisition, in its infernal fury; "by the union of my disciples in one Father and Saviour," said our Lord, in his wisdom and grace. The world that has been hardened in its infidelity, by the divisions of Christians, will be reconciled to our faith, when it shall behold our union in love. The church, which has been dis-

tracted and weakened, by sects, will become strong, by concentration, and will labour, with the animation of hope, when it sees Christ's prayer for the means answered; for then we shall press on vigorously towards the triumphant end. The Spirit of God, "the heavenly Dove," who

" Flies from the realms of noise and strife,"

will come down at the voice of united prayer, will grant what we agree together to ask, and will, with his ancient power, clothe the testimony of the Gospel; so that the hearts of men shall bow before it, as the leaves of the forest wave before the wind. It shall be said once more, "The Lord added to them thousands in a day."

2. The final glory of the church is the last object of Christ's

prayer.

This is introduced thus: "I, that glory which thou gavest me, have given them." The mediatorial glory Christ may be said to have given the Apostles, as he unfolded to them its nature, extent, and certainty; but, perhaps, he rather means, that he laid it out for them, as a father gives his property to his children, when he expends it for their welfare. All that glory to which Christ is exalted, he employs for the church. The kings of the earth gave their power and authority to the beast, by employing the influence of civil government to support the Papacy; and so Christ gives his glory to us, being made "head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." To the Apostles this especially applies; Christ gave to them his glory as the messenger of heaven's mercy to this world. He gave them to tread, like himself, the world beneath their feet, and show the shining path to glory. Power over unclean spirits, and all the kingdom of darkness, to seal their testimony with mira-culous signs, which was Christ's glory, was given to the twelve. The glory of uttering words which were the inspired oracles of heaven, demanding the faith of men, was conferred by Christ on those who hereby "sit on twelve thrones, judging, by the Scriptures of the New Testament, the twelve tribes of Israel."

What is the end and effect of this glory? "That they may be one as we are." Had he given glory to some only, they would have been divided by their different lot. But all those things which constitute the chief glory of Christ's disciples, are common to them all. They were all alike chosen in Christ, so that the glory of being God's elect given to Christ, as the first elect, Christians in general share, as being equally "chosen" in, or with Christ, from the foundation of the world. The glory of high acceptance, by which Christ was "the beloved Son of the Father, in whom he was well pleased," was given, in their measure, to all the children of God, who are accepted in the beloved; so that God is well pleased with them in him. The glory of reflecting the divine image, which belongs to Christ in the highest sense, is given to us, also, in our measure, as "we all, beholding with open face the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." The glory of being benefactors to the world, which is Christ's, in the most exalted degree, is given to all God's people. Finally, the glory of heaven, which Christ now enjoys, awaits us; for we are to "sit down with him on his throne, as he also overcame, and has sat down with his Father on his throne." Blessings in which we all share, give us a union of heart; for fellow Christians are precious in each other's eyes, as men whom "the Lord delights to honour."

"I in them," says Christ. We have seen, in other passages, that he dwells in us all, and in us sees his image, his love, and his glory. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," is the object of the apostolic prayer. To this he adds, "and thou in me;" for if Christ lives in us, the Father is in him, by the oneness of their nature, and the inseparable affection that subsists between the persons; so that by Christ living in us, the Father does also. "We dwell in God," says the Apostle, "and God in us," if we dwell in love. "That they may be made perfect in one," Jesus pleads; for this is our perfection, the unity of the saints. We are not perfected, as our selfishness would teach us, by

outshining each other, and by pursuing separate interests; but by maintaining the communion of the saints, and showing the world how closely Christians are united.

By this union, the world will be taught Christ's mission, and that the love which the Father bears to the Son, descends to the church, which is his body.

The intercession of our Advocate ends, as will our history, by virtue of it, in glory.

Mark the peculiar Christian aspect, in which the future glory of believers is exhibited. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me."

Addressing himself again to the Father, with all the affection and confidence of the beloved Son, Christ shows that the essence of his intercession consists in the expression of his will. For, after that profound consecration to obedience, which said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me;" he was exalted to say, "I will," and the thing was sure. He interceded as a priest on a throne, where grace swayed the sceptre of authority. The disciples were immediately to see him in the lowliest posture of obedience, prostrate on the earth, saying, "If this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, not my will, but thine be done." It was, therefore, a cheering exhibition of approaching glory, to hear him utter the authoritative mandates of his will.

The objects of his intercession are commended to the Father, as those whom he had given to Christ. This at once claims the Father's regard for his own elect, and speaks Christ's satisfaction in the gift, that his soul acquiesced in their glory. He longed to have them with him wherever he might be; and for this end, "that they might behold his glory." While at a distance, we see our Lord by faith; but through a glass so darkly, that it is said, "now ye see him not:" then we shall "see him face to face, and know, even as we are known." The glory which Christ would have us to behold, is not merely the splendour

of his person, which is the light of the blessed, so that they need not the sun, but also that mediatorial glory of supreme dominion and merited honour, by which God highly exalted him, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," through all worlds. To behold this glory, would be to see how the Father had loved him before the foundation of the world. It will be known, by the final state of Christ, that the world's foundations were laid, and "all things were made by him and for him." To behold this, will make the ransomed exclaim,

"Here we could sit and gaze away A long, an everlasting day."

This is what has been technically termed the beatific vision, which constitutes the peculiarity of the Christian view of final bliss. It contains every element of sublimity, virtue, and felicity. Instead of the grovelling sensual character of a Mahomedan paradise, sight, the least sensual of our senses, is employed to express knowledge: "that I may behold the beauty of the Lord." The pure in heart are blessed, for they shall see God. This view of final bliss has the stamp of virtue; for instead of mere self-gratulation, the blessed will enjoy another's bliss, and find themselves happy in seeing the most exalted model of virtue rewarded for his sacrifice to the rights of justice, the triumphs of mercy, and the love of God and souls. Hence will result to us felicity most intellectual, most holy, and most lasting. To the Apostles, who loved their Lord, and now saw him under a dark veil, soon to become still more dark, what could be so cheering as to hear him interpose his mighty will, that they should, after the separation they dreaded, be with him, to see him in such glory as would show how the Father loved him? I do not ask what vigour or felicity of language can express, but what sublimity or spirituality of mind can conceive, the joy which Christians will feel, when beholding without a veil that glory which the Father has given to the Son?

This singular exhibition of bliss is corroborated by considerations altogether Christian. The additional idea is thus introduced,-"O righteous Father!" Righteousness is the practical application of holiness to the moral government of the world, in which Jehovah shows himself a lover of what is just and equal. Deity is essentially righteous; but in the mediatorial scheme, the Father is the guardian of righteousness, and Jesus Christ, the righteous, is the propitiation to declare God's righteousness in the forgiveness of sin. There is some difficulty in connecting what follows with the immediate context, and with the whole prayer. I consider the first kai which our translators seem to have omitted, not knowing what to do with it, as employed, like the Hebrew 1 for although. "Although the world has not known thee, yet I have, O righteous Father. I am about to satisfy thy righteousness; though the world will consider thee as abhorring me. But I know that thou wilt honour my obedience unto death, with supreme glory." Against the blindness of the world Christ opposes, too, the consideration, that "these have known that thou didst send me;" for "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world." The Father had said, "therefore, my people shall know my name;" and Christ said, "I will declare it;" for the knowledge even of the Apostles was far from complete. There were also other sheep, not yet of the fold, who were to hear the Shepherd's voice; and much as Christ had made known of the Father, he would show still more. This was the design of the whole, "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Consider Christ as the head of the body, and Christians as the members, so that the love of the Father was directed towards the whole body, consisting of Christ and the elect. But these last have not the Father's love to the Son dwelling in them, till Christ declare it to them, in their effectual calling, when "the love of God is shed abroad in their heart, by the Holy Ghost given to them." To this our Redeemer adds, and "I in them." "I will come and dwell

in their hearts by faith." Having staked his interests and honour in them, he will be in the faithful as long as the world, the church, or eternity lasts. The prayer closes with these words, "I in them;" for Christ in you is the hope of glory. Let the last words of such a prayer, offered for you by such a friend, be ever in your ears, and never cease to ask, that Christ may say of you, "I am in them."

By closing his ministry with a prayer, our Redeemer has taught us to study his sermons in a devotional spirit; for as he pleads with us for God, like one that pleads with God for us, so should we hearken to all his preaching, like those whose hearts have been melted by his prayers. Can we hear him pour out his heart in our behalf, on the verge of eternity, and not recall all that we have heard from his lips, and find it go to our hearts as it never did before? The heavenly purity of that doctrine taught on the mount, ceases to appear too high for us, when we hear him pray for our sanctification; the manifold wisdom of the parables, which bring out lessons of virtue from every object of sense, seems the natural attendant of words given by the Father to be brought down to us; and those anticipations of judgment and eternity, with which Christ's preaching closes, no more make us shrink from death, when we think of it as going to see Christ in his glory.

If, then, we aspire after the holiness of our religion, or feel our need of its ineffable grace, or would rejoice in hope of the glory of God, we should, like Mary, "keep all Christ's sayings, and ponder them in our hearts."

Drawn within the hallowed circle of his last prayer, we are surrounded as with a wall of fire, that guards us from a hostile world. Following the high priest as he passed within the veil, we are cheered with the fragrance of the incense he offered all the way, and are emboldened to enter into the holiest of all, that we "may see his glory." While yet waiting on the outside, we are not kept idle, but honourably employed, to bring the world to believe and enjoy with us; and hear his friendly voice pleading within for all we need while here, and for our welcome admission when the wisely

appointed hour is come. When he, who at present asks not that we should be taken out of the world, shall say, "Now I will that they be with me where I am;" the delays, and labours, and sufferings of a life will be repaid by the sight of that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and that with which for the suffering of death he is crowned; for they sung a new song, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. Worthy is the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

THE END.

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